

Omani TV airs minister's meeting with Israelis

THE signing of the Declaration of Principles with the PLO will encourage other Arab countries to realize the mutual desire for peace, Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Bin-Alawi told Israeli journalists yesterday.

Bin-Alawi made a special trip to the Muscat Intercontinental Hotel to speak to the Israeli reporters in a meeting broadcast on Omani television.

The visit is being viewed by Arabs and Israelis as another sign of the positive atmosphere which has prevailed at the multilateral talks on water which end here today.

The talks are considered the most successful since the multilateral meetings were established in Moscow in 1992.

Asked why Oman, which supported Egypt in the Camp David Accords, does not make peace with Israel, Bin-Alawi said: "We are sure you understand in Israel that it is not possible for Oman or any other

Arab country to take this step until a full, permanent, and just peace has been reached between you and the neighboring Arab countries. You cannot think about peace with distant countries until you have peace with nearby ones."

Bin-Alawi also spoke of reaching a state of "psychological peace" after more than 40 years of enmity.

He praised the DOP as a step in the right direction. "We must forget the past. Progress is based on the future. We need to progress without hesitating," he said.

Although Oman maintains relations with Iran - and Iraq - it will not facilitate renewed Israeli-Iranian relations unless the Teheran government decides on them, he said.

LIAT COLLINS

MUSCAT, OMAN

"It is important that first of all, there will be real progress between Israel and its neighbors, especially Syria," Bin-Alawi said. He said this would involve Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

The lifting of the Arab boycott is dependent on the completion of all stages of the peace process, he said. "The peace process started at Camp David will not be reversed. The Arabs are not a war-loving, violent people. They believe in peace and love. The acts of violence we see today are in response [to Israeli actions]. The Arabs expect Israel to accept greater responsibility in stopping acts of violence and consequent revenge attacks."

He also said Israel had a greater responsibility for peace, as it "conquered Arab

lands. Our aim is to realize peace with Israel and act towards social and economic development in the area." He added: "I want to tell you as Israelis that you are part of the Middle East, not Europe."

Meanwhile, during yesterday's mainly technical meeting, an agreement was reached that Israeli and Omani would work together on a solar energy project as part of the marine desalination research plant in Oman, agreed upon earlier this week.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin confirmed that an Israeli team was expected in Oman in two weeks to start work on the project, and an Omani team would pay a reciprocal visit to Israel two weeks later.

Last night, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak landed in south Oman for a meeting with Sultan Qaboos. The Omani news agency noted that the Egyptian president's visit coincides with the presence of the Israeli delegation, but officials could not confirm any planned meeting between them.

Several Mapam members consider quitting party

MICHAEL YUDELMAN

A GROUP of Mapam members, most of them prominent Histadrut activists led by Acting Histadrut Trade Union Section Efraim Zilony, intend to quit their party, following its decision to join MK Haim Ramon's non-partisan list as part of Meretz.

Histadrut Secretary-General Haim Haberfeld said yesterday that there will always be a place in his coalition for Mapam members who want to join it or work with it.

The group, which met in Tel Aviv last night to discuss its future moves, is torn between those who wish to form a separate list and run in the Histadrut elections as the real Mapam, and those who don't think there is a chance of getting into the Histadrut on such a list and simply want to support Labor.

Those in favor of forming a new list want to call it "Mapam Loyalists," maintaining they are the ones who have not left Mapam, and are true to its positions, while the party's leaders have betrayed their principles in joining first Meretz and then Ramon's list.

Members of the group said that by joining Ramon's non-partisan list, Mapam is dooming itself to political oblivion. Already as part of Meretz, they said, Mapam's socialist values were all

but swallowed up in Meretz's right-wing social positions. In a non-partisan list, Mapam would lose all trace of its identity, they charged.

No decisions were reached by yesterday evening, and the group met again last night to continue the debate.

Meanwhile, the Joint Arab and Jewish List decided to direct much of its Histadrut campaign at those disappointed by Meretz, especially Mapam members who cannot accept the party's decision to go with Ramon.

The Joint List has already appealed to these groups not to run either with Ramon or re-enter the Histadrut apparatus headed by Haberfeld, as Zilony might be doing, but to join it in building a socialist left-wing bloc which will fight for workers' rights, for minimum wages, and other privileges for the weaker classes.

Joint List spokesman Adam Keller said yesterday it is the only list which will not form a coalition with the Likud under any circumstances, compared to Labor and Ramon, who say they won't join the Likud as a first option, but will consider it if the rival party does. "This means that anyone voting either for Labor or for Ramon-Meretz, may find himself in a coalition with the Likud," he said.

UN observers could patrol Hebron next week

JON IMMANUEL

UP to 160 international observers from Norway, Denmark and Italy could begin patrolling in Hebron early next week, if a decision is reached on their mandate by tomorrow as scheduled.

The mission, which Israel accepted as a concession to PLO demands following the massacre in Hebron on February 25, prefers them to be unarmed, said Kaare Eltervaag, counselor at the Norwegian Embassy.

Eltervaag said that signing of a draft memorandum of understanding is scheduled for tomorrow, most likely in Copenhagen, but only if an agreement on arming the observers is reached. This would permit deployment by Sunday or Monday, he said.

"The attitude of the participating countries is that they should not have weapons," he said. "Basically the mission will patrol the streets of Hebron and report on any incidents to the joint Hebron committee consisting of two Israelis and two Palestinians."

The committee includes the military governor and the mayor of Hebron.

Eltervaag said the observers preferred to call themselves a "mission" rather than a "force" to avoid being considered police or soldiers. Norway has the largest contingent with 90 observers.

Many Palestinians have criticized an unarmed observer force as useless against what they term threats from settlers. So far the only threats have been made by Islamic fundamentalists against the observers themselves.

Hussein rules out peace deal without Arab sovereignty over east Jerusalem

AMMAN (AP) - King Hussein yesterday reiterated his stand that Middle East peace cannot be achieved without the restoration of Arab and Moslem rights in Jerusalem.

Speaking at a celebration marking the completion of restoration work at the Dome of the Rock, Hussein said: "We say no to any proposed solution that does not restore Arab sovereignty to Arab Jerusalem so that the whole city would eventually become a token and symbol of peace for all the

faithful children of Abraham." Over the weekend, unknown vandals smashed the marble plaque bearing an inscription citing Hussein's \$8.4 million contribution to renovating Al Aksa. An Islamic group calling itself "The Arab Liberation Front," with headquarters in Lebanon, is suspected of being responsible for the vandalism. Wafk officials managed to replace the plaque in time for the filming of the renovated mosque, shown at the Amman celebration.

News of ax attack catches suspect's family by surprise

BILL HUTMAN

IBRAHIM Abu Ramuz, sitting at home in his pajamas after a hard day at work yesterday afternoon, showed no emotion as he heard the news his son was being held by police for carrying out the ax attack in Jerusalem.

His wife, however, could not hold back the tears.

"If I knew he was doing it, I would have locked the door and not let him out. I would have beat him," she said. "I can't believe this has happened."

The 44-year-old father then broke his silence. "It is not good when people are hurt. It does not help anyone."

Several of his 14 children gathered around him, listening to the 5 p.m. news and for the first time taking in the news of their brother's involvement in a terror attack.

Police had yet to contact the family at their home in the Kalandia neighborhood, just north of Jerusalem, concerning 17-year-old Bilal Abu Ramuz's involvement.

The attack occurred only a few kilometers to the south, but several hours afterwards, few residents appeared to have heard what happened.

"He may have attacked them, but they also attack us," said Maher, a teenage brother of Bilal's.

Over a doorway in the home hung the picture of another brother injured by army gunfire during the intifada. Last week, a Kalandia youth was fatally wounded by soldiers during a stone-throwing incident.

Family members could not say whether the injury of his brother, the other youth's killing, or some other event led Bilal to carry out the attack.

They also refused to believe that he belonged to Hamas, as the group claimed. "He went to the



Bilal Abu Ramuz

mosque sometimes, but he was not especially religious," said a relative.

Family members described Bilal as a quiet youth. For the past two months he had a road construction job near Beit Shemesh. Beforehand, he worked at Haya's Bourekas Shop in Givat Shaul.

"Bilal's boss would drive him to (the) Givat Shaul (neighborhood in Jerusalem), and from there he would take the bus home," said Abu Ramuz.

He would often come home late in the afternoon, so no one in the family was surprised yesterday that he was late yesterday.

The family moved from the Silwan neighborhood near Jerusalem's Old City to Kalandia 15 years ago. Like most other neighborhood residents, they had blue Israeli identity cards that allowed them to move freely in Israel, even during the present closure, unlike other residents of the administered territories.

BEIRUT (AP) - Lebanon severed relations with Iraq yesterday, saying Saddam Hussein's government had ordered the assassination of a prominent Iraqi dissident in Beirut last week.

Information Minister Michel Samaha announced the decision after a cabinet session. He said Iraqi diplomats at the mission in Beirut had 72 hours to leave the country.

Samaha did not say how many Iraqis worked at the embassy.

The mission is headed by

Charge d'Affaires Awad Fakhri. He is assisted by at least four diplomats, two of whom already are in police custody in connection with Tuesday's murder of Sheikh Taleb Ali Suhail.

"Lebanon regrets that after it had regained its security and stability, some foreign countries, including a supposedly brotherly Arab country, still insist on violating all international laws and conventions and regard Lebanese territory as a playground for foreign intelligence services," Samaha said.

He said that although the Iraqi charge d'affaires personally heard their confessions, Baghdad still refused to lift the diplomatic immunity to allow the prosecution of the suspects - Cultural Attache Mohammed Kazem Faris, 37, and Commercial Attache Khaled Aliwan Khalaf, 35.

"The two detained Iraqi diplomats have admitted that they carried out the crime... at direct orders from the Iraqi intelligence department in Baghdad communicated to the Iraqi embassy in Beirut by telex," added Samaha.

Lebanon severs ties with Iraq over dissident's murder

Ramon's expulsion from Labor - the only question is when

EVELYN GORDON

THE Labor Party will probably ask the Knesset house committee to expel Haim Ramon and his partners from the Labor Knesset faction next week, faction chairman Eli Dayan said yesterday.

Dayan said the faction definitely intends to demand that Ramon, Amir Peretz and Shmuel Avital be removed from the faction; the only question is when.

However, house committee chairman Hagai Merom (Labor) said he would make every effort to avoid having the committee rule on the issue, since he would prefer not to set a "far-reaching precedent."

Instead, he said, he will try to persuade the three MKs to leave voluntarily, with the party's consent. "Expelling the three from the faction would be a final split," he said. "But I believe there will still be people [in Labor] who will be interested in maintaining the small connection [that remains]."

Merom said there is currently no precedent for a faction expelling members. Should the committee reach a decision on Molodet's demand to expel MK Shaul Guttman, however, this would set one.

The discussions on Guttman's case have already convinced the committee's legal adviser that it is possible for a faction to expel an MK, which he had previously ruled impermissible, Merom said. However, the MK must have shown through his behavior that he has already effectively left the faction.

RABIN

(Continued from Page One)

peace conference in Madrid," he said. "Peace today seems closer than ever. There is a chance - there is a good chance - we can put an end to the wars, to 100 years of terror and blood."

The army, he said, is doing everything in its power to fight Hamas terrorism.

"You're tying [the army's] hands!" shouted Uzi Landau (Likud).

"That's a crude lie!" shot back Rabin. "There is no limitation on the IDF's activity except the law." Netanyahu also devoted much of his address to terrorism.

"There has never been such a low in the security situation," he said. "The pace of terror has increased fourfold."

Of the 151 civilians who have been killed since the start of the intifada, he said, nearly 40 were killed in the last six months, since the agreement with the PLO was signed.

The upswing in terror, he charged, is largely due to the government's policy of releasing prisoners and allowing deportees to return.

"More terrorists mean more terror," he said.

Netanyahu also noted that the PLO has kept none of the three promises it made when the agreement was signed: to stop terror, to punish offenders, and to amend its covenant.

In the past six months, he said, Arafat's Fatah faction has committed 37 attacks on Israelis, resulting in six deaths and 14 wounded.

When Rabin attempted to say something in Arafat's defense, Michael Eitan (Likud) exploded. "Are you the PLO's spokesman?" he demanded. "You're the prime minister of Israel!"

Netanyahu said that because Rabin has not insisted that the PLO fulfill these initial three promises, the organization does not take any of Israel's demands seriously.



Haim Ramon and Shas MK Shlomo Benizri shake hands after Shas joined Ramon's Histadrut list yesterday, as Mapam's Haim Oron (left) and CRM's Ran Cohen took on.

Ramon plays David to Rabin's Goliath

ANALYSIS

SARAH HONG

HAIM Ramon has already disrupted the political status quo, regardless of how his campaign for Histadrut secretary-general proceeds from now until the May 10 elections.

For starters, he has dealt Prime Minister Rabin a stinging humiliation, one from which Rabin will not quickly recover and one which Ramon will gloat about no matter how loyal to Rabin he pretends to be. What happened at Sunday night's Mapam convention was a showdown between an aging political Goliath and a cocky political David, in which the upstart felled the giant.

While this may or may not be a harbinger of things to come, the plain fact is that Rabin, who has thus far been low-key about Ramon, was persuaded to pit his full political weight against him, on the assumption that this would crush him and serve as a deterrent to other dissidents, particularly on issues like the Golan or the Jordan Valley.

It's no good blaming the arena in hindsight. When Rabin chose to take Ramon down a peg, he knew just where the showdown would be, and yet Ramon won by a wide margin. This, if anything, underscores the total break between Ramon and the Rabin he helped bring to power and whose close adviser he was over most of the past two years.

Ramon also stole Shas from underneath Rabin, who was very eager to get Shas back into his coalition. Shas even initiated a coalition deal, but is now in no hurry to rejoin the government. This may be yet another Shas ploy to up the ante, and Rabin in desperation may yet meet the price.

but for now Shas has created more than a few doubts about just how committed it is to re-entering the coalition.

This is especially so as the pretext for Shas's delay was Meretz's putting a quote from the Declaration of Independence about the freedom of religion into the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. This, Shas said, was intolerable, though linking up with Meretz in a Histadrut list was not.

From Labor's point of view, this casts doubt on just how hostile Shas is to Meretz, and whether its hedging doesn't have more to do with the unpopularity among Shas's hawkish voters of the government's deal with the PLO. From Ramon's point of view, the Shas alliance is a great psychological coup, though its actual value is far from clear. Just how many votes can Shas deliver? For that matter, how many votes can Mapam guarantee? And how many of Ramon's most ardent boosters are even Histadrut members? The situation may well be too fluid for prediction. Many Labor members might vote for Ramon, Mapam members for Labor, and Shas members for the Likud.

The Likud is worried greatly by Ramon's psychological momentum. Many of its members do not belong to the Histadrut. Its source of steady growth in Histadrut representation came from protest voters, who may now have a trendier outlet. But if the Likud manages to hold on to its present power, it might end up the most courted coalition partner, proving the lesser evil for both Ramon and incumbent Haim Haberfeld. Should this be the case, the Histadrut will never be the same again.

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CHAL YUOELMAN

but swallowed up in Meretz's right-wing social positions. In the last election, Mapam would have lost all trace of its identity, the party charged.

No decisions were reached yesterday evening, and the group met again last night to continue the debate.

Meanwhile, the Joint Arab List decided to direct most of its Histadrut campaign at those disappointed by Meretz, especially Mapam members who came to accept the party's decision to join with Ramon.

The Joint List has already decided to these groups not to merge with Ramon or re-enter the Histadrut apparatus, headed by Zilony, but to join it in building a socialist left-wing bloc which will fight for workers' rights, for minimum wages, and other privileges for the weaker classes.

Joint List spokesman Adar Kuper said yesterday it is the only group which will not form a coalition with the Likud under any circumstances, compared to Labor and the Likud as a first option, but to consider it if the rival party decides to join it.

This means that anyone who leaves for Labor or for Ramon, Meretz, may find himself in a coalition with the Likud," he said.

Rabin stirs coalition row, accuses Meretz of foiling agreement with Shas

Shahal: Relations were better with Likud in national unity government

EVELYN GORDON

A VIOLENT argument erupted yesterday between Prime Minister Rabin and Meretz leaders at a coalition meeting, after Rabin accused Meretz of deliberately sabotaging the coalition agreement with Shas.

"Meretz vetoed Tsomet's [joining the coalition], and also torpedoed the addition of Shas," Rabin said at the meeting.

He noted that Shas had refused to join the coalition because of a change in the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation, which was made between its first and second readings. The change essentially adopted the Declaration of Independence — including its injunctions against discrimination on the basis of race, sex or religion — as part of the law.

"The Knesset law committee [headed by Meretz MK Dedi Zucker] played an ugly trick [on the bill]," Rabin charged. "[The change] has only one purpose — to prevent a coalition majority.

"The important thing now is to expand the coalition," he added. "The Freedom of Occupation Law is marginal for me. I would give it up completely if it interfered with the government's efforts to obtain a coalition majority."

Zucker and Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni reacted furiously to Rabin's charges. Aloni claimed that Meretz had made "every effort" to permit Shas to rejoin the coalition. Furthermore, she said, the addition to the Basic Law doesn't change anything, because the High Court of Justice already considers the Declaration of Independence to be part of Israel's "constitution."

Zucker said that Rabin could not accuse the committee of playing a "trick" when the change was adopted in the presence of a government minister (Justice Minister David Liba'i) and representatives of almost every party, and then

placed before the entire plenum for a second and third reading.

He also stressed that Shas is not the only party which has to answer to its voters. "We have to return to our voters and show them we've done something," he said.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal added fuel to the fire by charging that relations between Labor and Meretz were worse than those between Labor and Likud in the days of the national unity government.

"Relations on both the personal and parliamentary level were better [in the unity government]," he said. "I can't remember extremism like this."

No other MKs were given an opportunity to speak, since Rabin, apparently realizing that he had unleashed a tempest, called an abrupt end to the meeting after an hour. In order to calm tempers, he said, he would adopt Zucker's suggestion that further discussion of the issue be reserved for a smaller forum.



Police Minister Moshe Shahal makes a point to Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban at yesterday's coalition meeting. (Ha'aretz)

Legal ruling: Knesset faction may expel member

EVELYN GORDON

A KNESSET faction can expel one of its members, the house committee's legal adviser ruled during yesterday's hearings on Moledet's request to dismiss Shaul Guttman from the faction.

This ruling could make it possible for the Labor Party to have Haim Ramon, Amir Peretz, and Shmuel Avital expelled from its Knesset faction.

Chairman Hagai Merom said the committee's legal adviser had previously ruled that an MK must consent to being removed from his faction, but was convinced by the arguments advanced by former Likud MK and law committee chairman Uriel Lynn, who is representing Moledet.

Lynn argued there are times when "an MK has effectively resigned from the faction through his behavior," Merom said.

However, Moledet leader Rehavam Ze'evi must still convince the committee that this is the case with Guttman.

"[Guttman] doesn't participate

in meetings, he slanders me at every opportunity, and he has set up a movement to compete with us," Ze'evi said, explaining his belief that Guttman should be expelled.

Guttman, in response, put out a seven-page memo accusing Ze'evi of both personal immorality and betraying the ideals of the party. This, he said, justifies his open opposition to him.

Guttman charged that Ze'evi is guilty of illegal eavesdropping on MKs, forging protocols, and unspecified wrongdoing in connection with a double murder. Furthermore, he said, Ze'evi has failed to bring up the idea of transfer in any of his Knesset speeches, nor did he list transfer as one of Moledet's principles when registering as a party. This, he said, is a betrayal of Moledet's basic principles.

Guttman asked the committee to allow him to be represented by a lawyer. The committee agreed, so the hearings will continue after Guttman has obtained an attorney.

Ba-Gad protests refusal to allow Kach detainees, prisoner to see their newborn children

EVELYN GORDON

THE refusal to allow Jewish administrative detainees to visit their newborn children is discriminatory, MK Yosef Ba-Gad (Moledet) charged yesterday.

Ba-Gad has been trying unsuccessfully to arrange visits for Kach activists Baruch Marzel and Shmuel Ben-Ya'acov, whose wives just gave birth. He is seeking a similar visit for Kessar Mendes, serving a 21-month sentence for endangering life and assaulting a police officer in an incident in Hebron in which an Arab was shot to death.

Ba-Gad said that on humanitarian grounds, the first two were particularly important, since Marzel's wife had a cesarean section and Ben-Ya'acov's daughter was born a month prematurely.

Prisons Commissioner Arye Bibi told Ba-Gad that he has the authority to grant leaves for ordinary prisoners, but not for administrative detainees. Ba-Gad said he then applied to Police Minister Moshe Shahal, who told him a decision had to be made by the General Security Service. Ba-Gad therefore turned to Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who, he said, sent him back to Shahal.

Shahal then consulted with Attorney-General Michael Ben-Yair, and told Ba-Gad the three would have to appeal to a court to get leave. "This is persecution of Jews," Ba-Gad charged, saying the women would probably be out of the hospital before a court decided anything. The three have begun a hunger strike to protest the decision, he added.

Two Sinai Beduin caught smuggling heroin from Egypt

AMIR ROZENBLIT

TWO Sinai Beduin who had infiltrated from Egypt were caught last night north of Mitze Ramon, following a long chase by police. The two had a kilo of heroin in their possessions when caught, as well as field glasses, clothing, and other equipment indicating they were prepared for a long stay in the area. The two are to face a remand hearing shortly.

The long border with Egypt is frequently crossed by drug smugglers, and senior police officials have called the Negev "the country's drug warehouse."

Over the past several months, police have found numerous Sinai Beduin helping Egyptian and Israeli Beduin drug dealers smuggle hashish, heroin and other contraband — mainly tobacco and stolen goods — across the border on camels or donkeys by signaling when the area is clear.

Sinai Beduin who have been caught acting as lookouts for smugglers say their grave economic circumstances have led them to take advantage of this source of income, as they earn as much as 300 Egyptian pounds per crossing.

"I'm 60 years old. I have 10

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...sands of survivors of the Holocaust from them." Stephen Spielberg

Oman leads the Arab World in contacts with Israel

THE Sultanate of Oman, at the eastern edge of the Arab World, has taken the lead in recognizing publicly, through inviting Israel to this week's multinational negotiations on water, that the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 means eventual Arab cooperation with Israel, Western diplomats said.

The diplomats said Oman's decision to take the lead in the Gulf was not surprising. But they noted that it did not mean diplomatic recognition, an issue that remains dependent on Israel's progress in establishing peace with its immediate Arab neighbors.

They said the country under Sultan Qaboos for the past 24 years has consistently followed discreet and independent policies often at odds with the Arab consensus or the views of partners in the Saudi-dominated Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Its Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdullah, said yesterday a center to be set up in Oman to research economic ways of making drinking water from the sea would be open to all states attending the Muscat talks.

This was a clear reference to possible Israeli participation as it is

at the cutting edge of desalination technology and has already offered to share its expertise.

"The Omanis see this as a logical extension of the peace process but they will continue to move cautiously and discreetly," one diplomat said.

Omani officials say the sultanate's distinctive foreign policy is born of realism, self-interest and a long-term perspective that does not pander to emotion and short-term concerns.

"They have always been slightly different from their neighbors...they do not follow the herd," another diplomat said.

YOUSSEF AZMEH

MUSCAT

The diplomats said it was not surprising that the other Arab country that has reached a similar state in relations with Israel is Morocco, which is at the western extreme of the Arab World.

Oman was one of only two Arab countries that did not cut diplomatic ties with Egypt after the late President Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel in 1979. Egypt remains the only Arab state officially at peace with Israel.

Oman maintained friendly ties

with Iran throughout its 1980-88 war with Iraq when other Gulf Arabs openly backed Baghdad.

It did not cut ties with Baghdad after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait although it opened its military facilities to the Western allies who drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

It has also welcomed Jordan's King Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat who remain ostracized by other Gulf Arabs for showing sympathy with Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, who is leading the Israeli team at the Muscat session, has had contacts with senior Omani

political and economic officials on the margins of the talks.

Neither side is ready at this stage to say who those officials are because Oman remains officially committed to the Arab economic boycott of Israel. It has already come under fire from Syria for hosting the Israelis.

The Omani minister said yesterday that present contacts with Israel should be seen in the framework of international Middle East cooperation involving all nations of the region.

Israelis travelling with Beilin say they are aware that by coming to Oman they were entering the Gulf

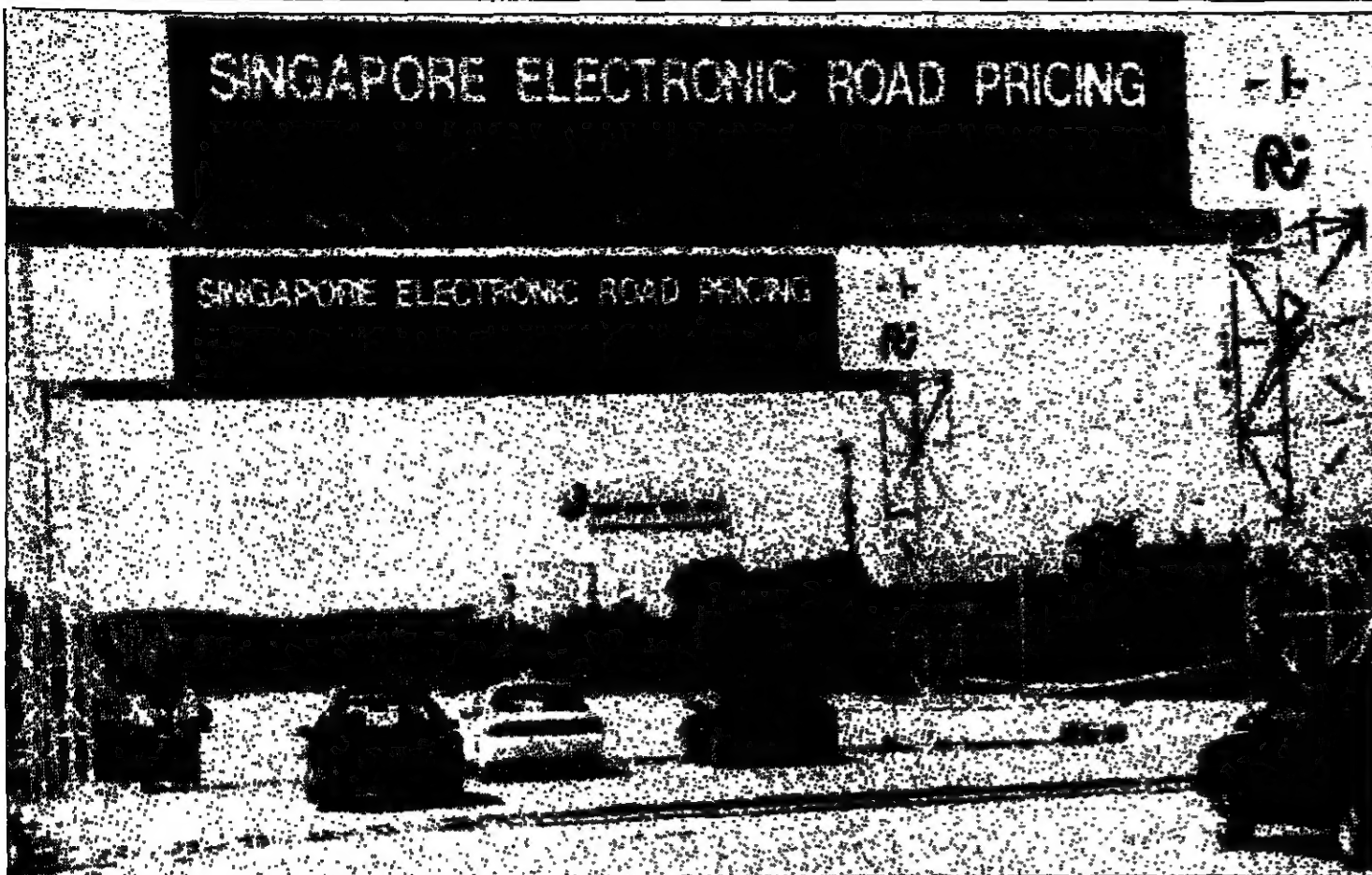
by the back door.

Qatar, another independent-minded Gulf state, is due to host another set of multilateral talks next month, one of the five topic forums launched at the Madrid conference in parallel with direct negotiations between Israel and its immediate neighbors.

But diplomats said that Bahrain had also agreed to host yet another set in the autumn and Israelis expect the United Arab Emirates to follow suit later this year or next.

The other two members of the GCC are Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

(Reuters)



Testing of Electronic Road Pricing, which will bill motorists each time they use Singapore's streets, gets under way at three locations yesterday. A stored value card, the size of a credit card, is attached to vehicles. As they pass a checkpoint, a detector automatically deducts the cost of using the road. (AP)

Bukharan Jews reach the end of the Silk Road

Lured by new life in Israel or New York

JAMES KYNGE

BUKHARA

THE Jews of Bukhara have survived vengeful Islamic potentates, watched dynasties rise and fall and weathered the whirlwind conquests of Genghis Khan.

But now members of one of the oldest communities in Jewry's diaspora are leaving this city on the old Silk Road.

Their departure casts a shadow on the changing face of Central Asia's holiest city, now trying to reclaim its lost eminence as a magnet for Moslem pilgrims.

"In two or three years' time there probably won't be any of us left in Bukhara," Amnon Shamsiev, head of the community of Bukharan Jews, said.

"In 1985 there were 12,000 of us. Now there are probably less than 3,000," added Shamsiev, sitting in a rainbow-colored gown as his children played around him.

In its widest sense, the migration was speeded by the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union which threw open long-sealed borders and gave Jews far bigger chances of moving to Israel.

Following the union's demise, this city of azure-domed mosques and shaded tea-houses became part of Uzbekistan — a mainly Moslem country which does little to dissuade its Jewish community from leaving.

"The average wage here is about \$8 a month. In Israel the lowest wage is about \$300 a month," said Ben Zion Yehoshua, manager of the Israeli information centre in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent. "When people hear that they want to leave."

Yehoshua's center houses an official Israeli organization in charge of coordinating emigration. Shamsiev said the lure of a new life in Israel — or sometimes in New York — had broken the back of Bukhara's Jewish community, whittling it away until those who remain now feel besieged.

"The community is so small we now have difficulty finding enough men to pray at someone's deathbed," Shamsiev said.

"This used to be a kind of ghetto. Everyone was Jewish and everyone helped each other. Now my neighbors are Uzbeks, Tajiks or Russians," he added. "We have no strength, no protection."

For centuries the Moslem rulers of Bukhara, some legendary for their cruelty, institutionalized humiliation and persecution towards members of the Jewish community.

Their houses and market stalls had to be lower than those of Moslems. Jews were not allowed to wear robes trimmed with gold filigree — a status symbol — and had to tie rough ropes around their waists.

Last century the Emir (ruler) levied a tax on Jews. A Russian traveller of the time reported that when Jews paid, the tax collector slapped them sharply across the face.

Yehoshua said Jews were also flung from the top of Bukhara's infamous Tower of Death, once the world's highest building and the only structure left standing by Genghis Khan's 13th century Mongol conquest.

"Persecution was everywhere," Yehoshua said. "There are accounts of Jews being thrown from the Tower of Death simply because they irritated the Emir."

But in spite of such persecution in the past, the Jews of Bukhara remain strict in observing Jewish customs.

Mystery surrounds their arrival here. Yehoshua, who wrote a book on the subject in Israel, said it is possible they are remnants of Israel's lost tribes who were transported to Assyria in 721 BC.

Nobody knows what became of the lost tribes but some scholars believe they ended up in present-day Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Others think the Bukharan Jews migrated here around the 9th century when Bukhara began to boom as a city on the silk route from China to Europe.

The exodus coincides with a slow resurgence of Bukhara as the fourth holy city of Islam.

Moslems believe that two pilgrimages here are equivalent to one trip to Mecca.

A hotel for pilgrims is under construction near the Tower of Death, while Islamic schools and mosques which closed during years of Soviet-enforced atheism have stirred into life again.

The dry sound of the Moslem call to prayer reverberates through alleys lined by mud-brick houses. It is answered by a tinkle of bicycle bells as the faithful make their way to the mosque.

As yet, however, Uzbekistan's labyrinthine visa requirements and the suspicion its ex-communist government reserves for the Islamic world have kept the number of pilgrims to a trickle.

(Reuters)

Quebec couple admit dumping infant's body, concocting yarn baby vanished in New York

NEW YORK (AP) — The Quebec couple didn't want their 4-year-old daughter to know her infant sister was dead. So, police said, when they went for a car ride they put a doll in a child seat.

The 10-week-old infant also was in the car, police said — wrapped in three plastic bags and stuffed into a knapsack. The parents had found her dead in her crib. Fearing trouble because of previous abuse allegations against them, they drove 70 miles to dump the body in Quebec woods, police said.

Over the next week, the parents — Joseph Bales, 33, and his wife, Helene Lemay, 31 — decided to drive with 4-year-old Priscille to

New York City and concoct a story that the infant, Muguet Bales, had disappeared here.

They told the story Saturday. It unraveled Sunday.

The parents admitted they dumped the infant's body, and they drew a map that helped police recover it. The cause of death would not be known until an autopsy planned for today in Montreal.

New York City police were suspicious from the start. Bales didn't report the disappearance until 18 hours after the infant supposedly vanished while Bales slept on a bench in Central Park. But about 75 police joined the case, including

scuba divers who searched Central Park ponds.

The parents even met with reporters Saturday night at the 20th Precinct police station, where they were being questioned, tearfully pleading for the return of the infant. Priscille was with them.

After checking with Customs and hotel officials and talking to Priscille, detectives determined that the parents hadn't brought the infant into the country, and the couple was charged with filing a false report.

Within several hours, confronted with inconsistencies in their stories, the mother and then the father admitted what really

happened, said John Hill, chief of Manhattan detectives.

"These aren't hardened criminals," he said. "If they were hardened criminals they wouldn't have made such stupid blunders."

The 4-year-old showed no signs of being abused, and was returned to Canada late Sunday night by officials of the Canadian Youth Protection Agency, said Sgt. Edelle James, a Police Department spokeswoman.

James said the suspects thus far had been charged in Canada with unlawfully disposing of a body. Any further charges would await a report from a medical examiner there, she said.

AIDS patient and church settle sexual abuse suit

CINCINNATI (Reuters) — A man suffering from AIDS who dropped sexual abuse charges against Chicago's Cardinal Joseph Bernardin has reached an out-of-court settlement in his lawsuit involving another priest and Cincinnati's Archdiocese, the church said.

Former seminary student Stephen Cook, 34, will be paid an undisclosed sum to settle the \$10 million lawsuit that accused a Cincinnati priest of molesting him in the late 1960s and early 1970s and charged Roman Catholic church officials with ignoring the situa-

tion, a Cincinnati Archdiocese spokesman said.

Bernardin became the highest-ranking US church leader to be accused of sexual improprieties until Cook dropped the allegations against him in February, saying that his recollections about Bernardin brought out through hypnosis were unreliable.

Bernardin was the archbishop in Cincinnati while Cook was a seminary student. The cardinal, now 65, has steadfastly denied all charges.

Cook, who has an advanced case of AIDS, maintained that

Reverend Ellis Harsham repeatedly molested him when he was a 17-year-old student at Saint Gregory Seminary in Cincinnati.

Harsham, 52, now runs a campus ministry programme at nearby Wright State University.

Cook's attorney, Andrew Lipton, told the Dayton Daily News that his client was satisfied with the settlement, although it did not include an admission of guilt by Harsham.

"(Cook) doesn't want to spend the rest of his life, which may be short, dealing with the stress of litigation," Lipton said.

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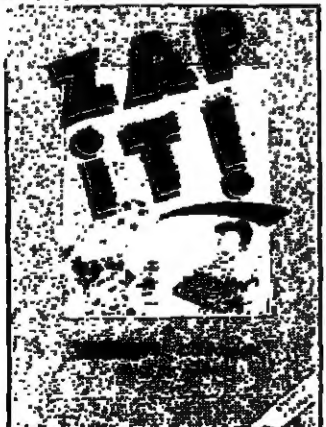
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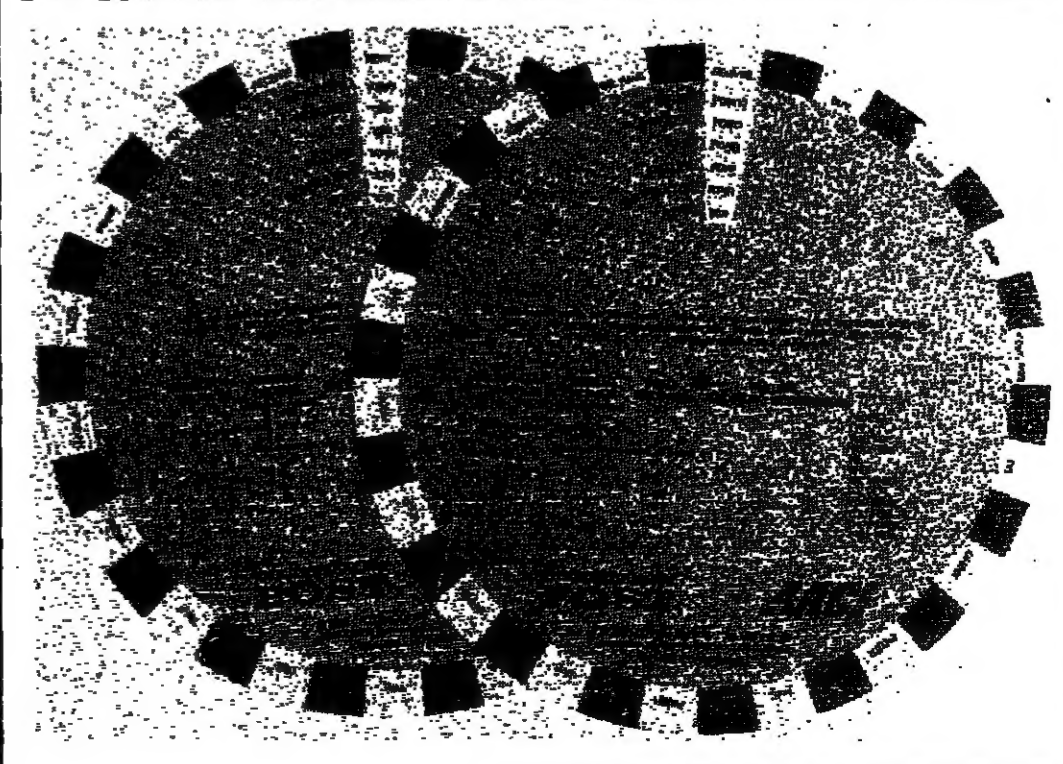
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Three people, part of a crowd of about 3,000, cry at yesterday's rally in Sarajevo, showing solidarity with the people of Gorazde.

EU ministers desperate for solution

LUXEMBOURG (Reuters) - European Union foreign ministers put a brave face on the humiliation of UN forces by Bosnian Serbs as they struggled yesterday to revive diplomatic pressure for an end to war in Bosnia.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe called for a new Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in the battered Muslim enclave of Gorazde, coupled with the withdrawal of Serb forces from an exclusion zone around the so-called safe area.

Juppe, who told reporters he had discussed his plan with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, also urged the sending of a UN battalion of French, British, Ukrainian and Egyptian troops from Sarajevo to Gorazde.

Juppe, speaking during a break in a regular EU foreign ministers' meeting, also urged much closer consultation between the EU, Russia, the United States and the United Nations to prevent the Serbs from playing them off against each other.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel appealed to Russia to use all possible pressure against the Serbs whose forces continued to batter Gorazde yesterday despite an earlier offer by their leader Radovan Karadzic to agree a ceasefire.

EU peace mediator Lord Owen, who arrived late for the meeting, said events such as the Serb attacks on Gorazde in defiance of NATO air strikes need not delay a diplomatic settlement because they underlined the urgent need to

reach such a deal.

Owen said it was a time to trust the judgment of UN commanders on the ground in Bosnia who had to deal with very difficult situations.

"The way ahead is to keep cool and steady and to use the Security Council resolutions as best as we can," Owen said.

"It will be very difficult and some of the things that have happened in the last few weeks will make it harder. That does not mean that they will necessarily delay (a negotiated settlement). It is a sign that we need a settlement earlier."

Owen said he was angry at the news media's treatment of the crisis, criticizing "laptop bombardiers" and saying that there should be an end to making the UN and

other bodies involved into scapegoats.

Hurd, speaking before the meeting, told reporters the EU would look to strengthen, not abandon, its peace efforts.

"I do not think that the Europeans will decide to abandon Bosnia or the effort in Bosnia so long as the benefits to the people in Bosnia outweigh the risks," he said.

Hurd was nearly drowned out by a few dozen demonstrators chanting "Gorazde, Gorazde", blowing whistles and carrying placards blaming the West for failing Bosnia.

The European Union's external affairs commissioner, Hans van den Broek, said the Bosnian Serb actions around Gorazde were "absolutely unacceptable" to the EU.

Gorazde at mercy of Serbs, UN commander says

SARAJEVO (AP) - Gorazde was at "the mercy of the Serbs," the UN commander for Bosnia said yesterday, as Bosnian Serbs shelled the Muslim enclave at will and thousands of refugees huddled in the streets for lack of shelter.

The shelling came after a week-end of broken promises by Bosnian Serbs to halt their attacks. The renewed bombardment and depth of the Serb advance marked the total failure of UN policy to deter the bloodshed.

"The town is at their mercy," Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose said yesterday. "And we are on the edge of a major humanitarian catastrophe."

He said Bosnian Serbs could enter town whenever they wish but ruled out further NATO air strikes against them. Seven British officers in Gorazde to direct NATO air raids were evacuated at dawn, UN officials said.

France called for an urgent meeting of the United States, Russia, European Community and

United Nations to deal with "the Serb challenge to the international community." French newspapers called the Gorazde situation a UN surrender and British papers saw it as a defeat for the Western powers.

Shells were exploding at a rate of one every 20 seconds yesterday, "dropping at random into the city center," said Ron Redmond, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva.

"The hospital has taken a direct hit on its roof," he said, citing a report yesterday from the UNHCR staff in Gorazde. Hits were also reported on government buildings near the city's mosque and a Red Cross building.

Aid officials in Gorazde reported 302 people have been killed, including 37 on Sunday, and 1,075 wounded since the latest Serb offensive began March 28, Redmond said.

Serb forces said they had overrun most of the Gorazde enclave, apart from the center of the town

itself and a 7-8 km stretch along the northern bank of the Drina River. That reduced the territory held by Bosnia's Muslim-led government to about a third of that held before the Serb offensive began three weeks ago.

The zone was declared one of six UN-protected "safe havens" nearly a year ago, but the United Nations has proved unable to help its 65,000 people, many of whom are refugees from other Bosnian areas.

"In my view, there is very little way to control the situation," Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin told reporters in Zagreb, Croatia. He spent the weekend negotiating with Bosnian Serb leaders and said he had never heard so many broken promises.

"Things are bad," Churkin said. Russia is a traditional ally of the Serbs.

Serb tanks lumbered into Gorazde's streets Sunday, but UN officials later said they withdrew from the city core.

UN soldier injured in Kigali

NAIROBI (AP) - UN officials said yesterday they might withdraw a 2,100-member peacekeeping force from Rwanda unless the warring factions agree to a ceasefire.

A Ghanaian peacekeeper was shot in cross-fire near Kigali airport and had to be evacuated with serious leg wounds, said Abdul Kabia, executive director of the UN force in Rwanda.

Rebel fighters of the minority Tutsi tribe blew up a government radio station in Kigali that had incited Hutus to slaughter Tutsis, Kabia said.

Kigali quieted overnight but intense gun battles broke out in the morning, he said.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in 11 days of fighting between the rebels and the Hutu-dominated government and in massacres by Hutu militia-men and gangs.

UN officials were trying to convince the warring sides to cease their fire at least temporarily so joint UN, rebel and army patrols can stop the looting and killing by marauding gangs.

A senior official of the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front met the Rwandan ambassador in Kampala, capital of neighboring Uganda, but no results of the talks were released, Kabia said.

Kabia said militia roadblocks made it impossible to enter the most violent areas to determine how many had been killed.

"Not even the government can enter there," he said.

Both sides have been warned the United Nations will pull its 2,100 Ghanaian, Bangladeshi, Senegalese and Polish peacekeepers from Rwanda "if the two sides continue to follow the logic of war," Kabia said.

"We will emphasize today that if

they don't enter a cease-fire immediately, they may be left alone" by the United Nations, he said.

An additional 420 UN troops from Belgium have turned over their duties to the 500-member Ghanaian UN force at the airport and are in the process of leaving Rwanda, Kabia said.

The fighting in Rwanda erupted after a mysterious plane crash on April 6 killed the presidents of Rwanda and neighboring Burundi. They were returning from a meeting aimed at finding an end to the feud between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups that has ravaged the countries for decades.

The rebels invaded Rwanda in 1990 from Uganda, long a base for Tutsi refugees and the rebels. Many of the rebels, including Gen. Paul Kagame, grew up in Uganda as children of refugees who fled Rwanda during ethnic violence more 30 years ago.

S. Africa political leaders upbeat on crisis talks

PRETORIA (Reuters) - Bitterly-opposed South African political leaders expressed rare optimism yesterday for a resolution of the country's elections crisis but renewed violence broke out in black townships.

White President F.W. de Klerk said he thought it was still possible in the next week to clear an impasse that led to an election boycott by the mainly-Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party.

The award-winning chief photographer at Johannesburg's Star newspaper, Ken Oosterbroek, was killed during gun battles in Tokoza township east of Johannesburg.

Two colleagues - Juda Ngenya of Reuters and Greg Marinovich of Newsweek - were shot and wounded.

In Pretoria, de Klerk, Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and top ANC officials including Secretary-General Cyril Ramaphosa held surprise talks on defusing violence surrounding South Africa's first all-race elections now just eight days away.

"I am hopeful that something constructive will come out of it," de Klerk said. "I am doing everything in my power...I have constantly been bending backwards to be constructive."

Later, he emerged from talks saying: "Some progress has been made. I am relatively optimistic of further progress tomorrow."

Buthelezi, who accuses de Klerk of selling out his mainly Zulu followers, said in an unusually upbeat assessment:

"I am optimistic about the fact that our talks today have gone very well...I hope that tomorrow we will be in a position to announce something that would be very positive."

The talks are set to resume at de Klerk's office at 10 a.m. today.

Buthelezi declined to give details of the talks or say if they could result in Inkatha's rejoining the political process. The Inkatha leader is boycotting the April 26-28 election because he says it will not deliver the autonomous Zulu state he seeks in Natal province.

Inkatha's Transvaal regional leader, Themba Khoza, told a news conference yesterday that if the party's demands had not been met by today afternoon his supporters would embark on mass action aimed at undermining the South African rand currency.

ANC and Inkatha supporters swapped gunfire in Tokoza yesterday, drawing in members of the newly deployed National Peace Keeping Force which combines units of the South African Defense Force with ex-guerrillas of the ANC armed wing.

It was not immediately clear if Oosterbroek was hit in the cross-fire or had suffered a broken neck. Marinovich, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was hit in the chest and Ngenya received a flesh wound.

Clinton takes a memorable spin in his cherished 1967 Mustang

CONCORD, N.C. (AP) - On a car-crazy day, a car-crazy President, Clinton was reunited with his beloved 1967 Mustang, drove it for less than 30 meters, and with obvious regret, walked away from it once again.

"What is it about Mustangs?" someone shouted above the crowd that watched as the president inspected a parking lot crammed with gleaming and lovingly restored vintage examples.

"They've held the imagination of Americans for 30 years," replied Clinton, who was helping the Mustang Club of America celebrate those three decades at a rally at the Charlotte Motor Speedway at Concord, N.C.

Would he buy a new one?

"I like the one I've got," Clinton said of the Mustang he and his brother, Roger, helped restore.

"But I can't even drive that while I'm president," he said, as his black presidential limousine purred nearby.

The Clinton Mustang convertible is being exhibited at an automobile museum in Arkansas.

Clinton's brief outing behind the wheel was along the speedway's track to the speaker's stand. The president drove, and a Secret Service agent rode shotgun.

When Clinton's Mustang held place of honor in the driveway of the Governor's Mansion in Little

Rock, Ark., its driver had the reputation of making some of his passengers uneasy.

So the present he received from speedway owner Bruton Smith was, perhaps, appropriate: A crash helmet signed by dozens of champion racers.

The president said he had a practical use for the helmet.

"I'm going to wear this to my next press conference," he said.

Almost every one who sees the First Mustang comes away with a different impression of its color: drab blue, sky blue, ice blue, silver blue, turquoise.

Clinton called it "aqua."

He spent more than two hours inspecting Mustangs of every color, most of them gleaming and glowing in the highest states of restoration. Ford Motor Co. brought out the Mustang in 1964 and sold 1 million of the cars in the first two years of production.

There were mango Mustangs and cherry and forest green and pink. A red model, stood out from the rest. It was smashed and battered along its entire right side. Both fenders were badly dented.

Clinton was told the car had been in great shape until an accident on Thursday. The owner asked for an autograph, so the president signed the car, in crayon.

His inscription read: "Rebuild. Bill Clinton"

Gorbachev knew he would go like Khrushchev

MOSCOW (AP) - Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev said yesterday that shortly after launching his reformist perestroika policy, he feared he would eventually be toppled like one of his predecessors, Nikita Khrushchev.

"We remembered the experience of Khrushchev, but we underestimated the reactionary forces of the past," Gorbachev told a conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of Khrushchev's birth, which fell on Sunday.

Khrushchev is best remembered for his so-called "thaw," a dramatic departure from the years of Stalinist terror that began with a se-

cret speech to a Communist Party congress in 1956.

Khrushchev proceeded to loosen the regime's grip and introduced certain freedom of speech, but left the structure and ideology of the absolutist Soviet state intact. He was ousted in 1964 by more conservative Communist Party apparatchiks and sent into forced retirement until his death in 1971.

Gorbachev launched his own policy of reforms, known as perestroika or restructuring, in 1985. Two years later, he resurrected Khrushchev's name from official disgrace.

At the conference, organized by his private foundation, Gorbachev said Khrushchev had a "great in-

fluence" on all Soviet reformers, he said. Khrushchev's "thaw" failed because it was an attempt to introduce reforms by the wrong methods.

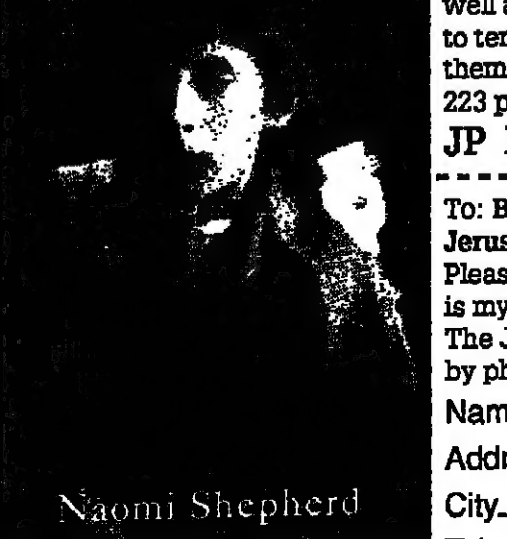
Gorbachev was forced to step down after the hard-line Communist coup of August 1991, which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

For many Russians, the names of the two leaders are intertwined forever, and the hard-liners view them as two links in a tragic chain of events that brought down the Soviet empire.

One decision by Khrushchev widely condemned in modern-day Russia was his 1954 transfer of the Crimean Peninsula to Ukraine's administrative control.

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Naomi Shepherd

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Arafat's promises

IT is a measure of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's distress that in his statement to the Knesset yesterday he found it necessary to enumerate the casualties of terrorism under Likud governments. The recitation was puzzling. No one disputes the persistence of Arab terrorism in this country, nor is there any argument over its being endemic to the region. What troubles Israelis is not merely the recent terrorist acts themselves – although the huge leap in their frequency and severity since September 13 is alarming – but that they are on the rise despite the "peace process."

As Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu pointed out in the Knesset debate, this is precisely what Rabin had promised would not happen. The most fateful Israeli concession since the establishment of the state – the recognition of the PLO, which must inevitably result in the establishment of a Palestinian state between Israel and Jordan – was supposed to drastically reduce terrorism if not completely eliminate it. That terrorist acts have steadily increased is a sad commentary on "the process."

Rabin is obviously aware of the problem, and his repeated warnings to the PLO that there can be no agreement with Israel if the organization consents to continued Hamas terrorism is welcome. But if such warnings are not to be viewed as the roars of a paper tiger, the government must insist on the fulfillment of other agreements.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

Israel has not demanded that the PLO keep its side of the Oslo bargain. It is not only that Yasser Arafat is unwilling or unable to condemn acts of terrorism. He is obviously treating any written commitment – whether it is the obligation to amend the PLO covenant or to punish dissident PLO factions – with unmitigated contempt.

His conduct is no different from that of other dictatorial leaders. The Nazis and Soviets habitually disregarded treaties, and so have Saddam Hussein and Hafez Assad. Nor is Israel being singled out: Arafat has kept neither his agreements with Arab states nor his promises to the US. But after ignoring his violation of agreements signed only seven months ago, Israel can hardly be taken seriously when it threatens to withdraw from the process if he violates them again.

It may boost Israeli confidence in Rabin's moves if before releasing thousands of terrorists from prison and permitting the arming of a whole army of experienced PLO gunmen in the guise of a Palestinian police, the government insist on the fulfillment of at least one Arafat commitment. Last December he gave "his word of honor" to disclose what the PLO knows about the Israeli Mias Zvi Feldman, Yehuda Katz and Zachary Baumel. Arafat's associates have admitted they have the information, but Arafat has refused to divulge it. Now the Mias' parents are on a hunger strike in the hope that Rabin will demand this information. It is not too much to ask.

A weighty accord

AFTER six years of tortuous, acrimonious but mainly boring haggling, the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of GATT talks was signed by over 100 countries in Marrakesh at the weekend. GATT itself will now cease to exist and be replaced by a new body, the World Trade Organization.

In its long history and seven rounds of convoluted trade talks, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade gained the reputation of being the media's answer to the sleeping pill – a GATT dispatch guaranteed glazed eyes and nodding heads in any news editor's office. The GATT acronym was often translated as the General Agreement to Talk and Talk. Last year, it gained a brief spell in the real world of TV talk shows by being hitched to Hollywood, after the French accused America's glitzy movie industry of trying to swamp Europe's cultural values. But after its short spell in the limelight, GATT returned to the bottom of the back pages as it plowed through debates on iron pellets and bovine meat produce. As one journalist reported from Marrakesh on Friday "experts on fish continued discussing bananas in an attempt to resolve a dispute about bridges."

Despite the sniggers, the GATT treaty will probably have a profound influence on the lives of the billions of people who will never read through its 26,000-pages. Economists confidently predict the accord, designed to liberalize trade, will add a staggering \$200 billion a year to world income within the next 10 years. Other experts say its main achievement will be to introduce a civilized disputes-settlement procedure to the present wild jungle of international trade. The long line of ministers and officials who trooped up to add their signatures and pay homage at the 175-kilo, two-meter-high pile of vellum-bound tomes euphorically pledged their honor to fight protectionism and unfair trade practices.

Moves to reform world trade began as a temporary measure in the aftermath of World War II when the "General Agreement" was signed by 23 countries at Geneva's Palais des Nations after the "first trade round." Other "rounds" followed as GATT sank its sprouting teeth into an ever widening range of tariffs

and subsidies – the Ancey, Torquay, Geneva, Dillon, Kennedy, and Tokyo Rounds issued ever more incomprehensible "agreements." In 1986 began the Uruguay Round – GATT's most ambitious effort, which brought trade in services and agriculture into negotiations. This set the US and Europeans growling at one another in a ferocious wrangle over farm subsidies that held up the Final Act for four years past its deadline – and confirmed GATT's image as a never-ending yawn.

The majority of the 124 governments involved, plus the European Union Commission, must now send the treaty to their parliaments. Brave indeed will be any legislature that attempts to haggle over every dot and comma in the treaty, but the US Congress and the French National Assembly have demonstrated more than a little scorn for GATT and all its works.

The new WTO replacing GATT is designed to have wide and serious powers its parent never had. This is sure to attract some jaundiced American eyes ever suspicious of bureaucratic international talk-shops with ambitions to become monoliths. Indians have already rioted in the streets over their fears that the textile agreements are a First World plot to keep their labor cheap and their industries locked out of lucrative Western markets. In the European Union, the ghost of the Maastricht Treaty's stormy passage already haunts the GATT accord.

Next January the world will get the WTO, supposed to be a tough new, internationally sanctioned body to enforce the rules and settle disputes. Its agenda reads like one for a new world government – world trade procedures, sanctions against treaty breakers, labor standards, immigration policies, competition policies, political stability, ending poverty.

It is indeed an ambitious blueprint for yet another new world order. Cynics are going to take a lot of convincing that the WTO is not going to be a hideous and horrendously expensive Frankenstein monster – one requiring whole forests to be leveled to feed printing machines that will convert the hot air it generates into mountains of unread paper in 100 languages.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CAPITULATING TO TERRORISM

Sir, – If our government feels that the goal of terrorist attacks is to kill the peace process, perhaps they feel that terrorism will stop if we call off the peace process, since their goal will then have been achieved. A decision should then be made: Is it better to have a peace process with terrorist attacks, or no peace with calm and security?

But of course, this is a fallacy, as terrorist attacks will continue in either case, as stated by the PLO and Hamas, as long as Israel occupies "Arab land."

The government states that halting the peace talks would be giving in to terrorism. Why is it giving in to terrorism to demand that Arafat use his influence to halt terror attacks in exchange for our return to the bargaining table? Why is it more important to us to give the Arabs autonomy and an eventual state, than it appears to be to the Arabs?

One may answer that it is Hamas and not the PLO which engages in terrorism and that Arafat

would not be able to halt terrorism at this point. But isn't the PLO's Fatah just as active as Hamas and haven't they performed as many terrorist acts? Why did the Israeli government apologize to Arafat for killing Fatah Hawks in a gun battle? Isn't Arafat working in cahoots with Hamas? Isn't it Hamas terrorists whom Arafat is demanding be released from prison?

It is possible that Arab terrorism will continue despite their receiving everything they are demanding. There may be no satisfaction for the Arabs in a Palestinian state if it is given to them. There is only honor in a state which is fought for and won in battle. At this time they appear to be winning their war by engaging in military activity on one front, while demanding "peace" at the bargaining table on another front.

Which is more of a capitulation to terrorism: halting the so-called peace process, or granting the Arabs autonomy and eventually an independent state?

AVI AUERBACH
Efrat.

TENDENTIOUSNESS

Sir, – The Los Angeles Times published on March 31 the dry statistics of the top subjects of letters sent by readers in March. In my opinion, this represents a reflection of the way in which the editors of this newspaper present tendentious articles, pictures and information about American and foreign affairs.

It indicates that the Hebron massacre is the only major international problem. From the 239 letters received about the recent tragic event in the thousand-years-old Jewish city and capital of Hebron, the one picked for publication praises the "peace-loving" organization of Hamas. As a confirmation that the Palestinians need international protection, the picture of three crazy Jews praying at the grave of the killer Goldstein (both acts I absolutely condemn) was published the same day, and the explanation given was that "Israelis pray in a demonstration against the peace process." Professionally well done!

CHAIM T. HOROVITZ
Corona del Mar, California.

Haberfeld's sweet dreams



Buy now, pay whenever

MITCHELL G. BARD

AMERICAN reliance on oil imports set a record in 1993, reaching 49.5 percent, according to the American Petroleum Institute. The number one foreign source of US oil was Saudi Arabia.

As the dominant force in OPEC, Saudi Arabia has great influence on oil prices. Relative to other members, the Saudis are moderates, but no one should believe for a minute that their efforts to manipulate the market served anyone's interests but their own. While attempting to gouge the West, the Saudis have portrayed themselves as allies.

The strategy has worked. Though it isn't widely known, the military relationship America has with Saudi Arabia predates the US-Israel alliance. In the last 15 years, especially, the US has been selling the kingdom some of its most sophisticated weapons, including AWACS radar planes, F-15 and F-16 fighters and Patriot missiles. In the 1990s alone, US sales and service contracts with the kingdom have totaled approximately \$30 billion.

Many people, particularly friends of Israel, have questioned these transfers. Republican and Democratic administrations have repeatedly argued that the sales were in the interest of national security, to help the Saudis protect the oil fields against the Soviets, the Iranians and most recently the Iraqis.

Critics have said that the arms would do little good because the Saudi military is too small to resist the overwhelming numbers of any of those nations, regardless of the hardware in their arsenal. This position was proven by the Gulf war, where it was clear the Saudis were helpless without American troops. Furthermore, critics have correctly noted, the greatest threat to the Saudi government may be internal opposition to the feudal monarchical state, a danger that cannot be eliminated by sophisticated arms.

The unrestrained flow of weapons to Saudi Arabia has also made

a mockery of American arms-control policies.

Though the greatest emphasis has been placed on nonconventional weapons, Middle East analysts have consistently argued that curbs must be placed on the flood of conventional arms sent to the region if any meaningful arms-control agreement for the region is to be reached.

In extending credit to the Saudis, Washington makes a mockery of its arms-control policies

reached. The limited efforts to prevent renegade nations from obtaining Western arms have been undermined by the Saudis' transfer of US equipment to third countries like Iraq (in 1986) and Syria (in 1991).

THE RECENT negotiations over the Saudis' debts should end the charade that the US is selling them arms for any reason other than to create jobs for Americans and lower the production cost of weapons for the Pentagon.

The deal the US government and defense contractors signed allows the Saudis to stretch out their purchases and thereby avoid cancellations or delays that could have closed production lines. Moreover, the position taken by the Clinton administration in the negotiations helped secure yet another job-creating deal with the Saudis, the purchase of \$6 billion worth of commercial planes.

Of course, the benefit to the American economy has always been one of the arguments made for arms sales to the Saudis and every other foreign government.

Bill Clinton abandoned the pretense of national security as the motivation for the sales even before he was elected when he advocated the sale of F-15s to the Saudis during the election campaign in a clear play for votes in Missouri, home of McDonnell Douglas, the plane's manufacturer.

At the time, sufficient opposition to the sale had been mounted in Congress to discourage president Bush from seeking its approval. Once Clinton announced his support, however, Bush had the cover he needed and most of the Democratic opposition evaporated.

The case used to be made that one of the virtues of dealing with the Saudis was that they paid cash. According to the January loan-restructuring deal, the defense firms will borrow the money they are owed from international lending institutions with the Saudis paying the interest and guaranteeing repayment of the loans.

In addition, the Saudis apparently will not pay cash for the commercial planes. The US Export-Import Bank is going to offer loan guarantees to help them finance the purchase. No one seriously questions the ability of the Saudis to eventually pay off their loans, but buying on credit is not the same as paying cash.

From the Saudi point of view, the money it spends in the US is a good investment. Most importantly, it helps guarantee that America will be its protector.

At the same time, no great pressure is placed on the kingdom to end human rights abuses, to democratize, to end its boycott of Israel or to disband the oil cartel. Despite the lack of concessions, successive administrations have been content to have the Saudis buy American weapons and allow the US to protect them.

Both sides are happy. This makes good trade policy. The question is whether it is sound foreign policy.

The writer is a foreign policy analyst in Washington.

Prague's painful failure

JAY BUSHINSKY

THERE were 230,000 Jews in Czechoslovakia when the Nazis dismembered the ill-fated Central European democracy 56 years ago. Only 12,000 are left, divided almost evenly between its two separatist components.

But the school buildings in which Czechoslovak Jews learned about their heritage, as well as the synagogues, hospitals, old-age homes and other communal institutions, still stand. These structures, many of them architectural treasures or historical shrines, were confiscated by the Nazis or nationalized by the Communists who seized power in the 1948 coup d'état masterminded by Josef Stalin.

The Jewish cemeteries left intact after the six-year-long anti-Semitic orgy that culminated in the Munich Pact also became the property of the Fascist and subsequent Communist state.

This real estate is worth tens of millions of dollars.

But despite the recent festive welcome given Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus by his Israeli counterpart Yitzhak Rabin – Jerusalem's streets were festooned with red, white and blue Czech flags – the painful dispute between post-Holocaust Jewry and the Prague government was not resolved.

Klaus disregarded Rabin's plea for the return of the property in question to its rightful owner, the surviving remnant of his country's once-flourishing Jewish community.

Upon his return to Prague, Klaus tried to get his parliament to enact a bill according to which local Jews would have been asked to submit a list of 200 functioning

synagogues and non-vandalized cemeteries. This was to have been all that the community could request. The rest would remain state property.

Klaus set December 31, 1994, as the deadline for the Jewish com-

unity to submit its requests. The head of the World Jewish Restitution Organization's local office, Naftali Lavie, called it an "unacceptable deal." His reaction was identical to that of Jiri Danicek, president of the Czech Republic's Federation of Jewish Communities.

IN AN official statement issued in Prague, Danicek assailed the parliamentary maneuver attempted by Klaus's ODS (Civic Democracy Party). The ODS bid was blocked by a coalition of opposition parties, to the relief of Lavie and Danicek.

"The ODS party prevented dignified closure of a sad chapter in Czech history," Danicek said. "It aligned itself with its predecessors in its failure to use its power to put an end to the consequences of antisemitism in our country."

Among the valuable sites which the Czech Jewish communities want to retrieve is Prague's Jewish State Museum, one of the republic's most lucrative tourist attractions. The museum grosses 14 million Kron (\$700,000) annually.

Another is the exquisite synagogue at Cesky Tesin. The structure, built in 1928 and confiscated in 1938, is being used as a cultural center.

In contrast to the Czech Republic's surprising lack of sympathy for the Jews' request for restitution of their communal property, Slovakia has been fully cooperative and forthcoming, Lavie said. The Bratislava government is prepared to restore all the real estate stolen in November 1938 to its Jewish owners.

Behind the Czechs' harsh attitude lies a potentially painful problem: How to prevent large-scale restitution of Jewish property from becoming a precedent for the return of the even more valuable assets seized from the prewar German population of the strategic Sudetenland – the region Hitler used as a pretext for his cynical takeover of Czechoslovakia.

This may be an aspect of post-Cold War "realpolitik," but it should not be an impediment to granting the basic rights sought by Czech Jews.

How tragic that Prague, to which the Nazis shipped precious Jewish ritual objects for eventual display (upon the consummation of their genocide) in a grisly "museum of an annihilated race" should let materialistic considerations subvert justice.

The writer is a foreign correspondent.

Worry warts

JENNIFER PRADAS

IN novels and the cinema, women are frequently portrayed as neurotic, while men remain nonchalant and levelheaded. This obviously makes some women outraged, but I believe – Hillary Clinton notwithstanding – that this stereotype contains some truth.

Being somewhat neurotic myself, I have spent many hours pondering the reason why. I think I have isolated the culprit: women's magazines.

From *McCall's* to *Glamour* to *Mademoiselle*, these magazines have grasped the master key to selling subscriptions. They understand how women worry.

The following is a list of stories recently emblazoned across the cover of three *McCall's* magazines and one *Redbook*:

Common Diseases Doctors Miss
Rape – When and Where You're Most at Risk
Warning – What Doctors Forget to Tell You
How to Make Your Kids Feel Safe in a Scary World
Breast Cancer – The Clue You Might Miss
Carjacking – How Not to Be Next
Mom, I have AIDS – 5 Mothers' Stories

Women are neurotic. But men could use a few new phobias

How to Protect Your Kids From Madonna
Do You Have a Heart Disease Personality?
The Fatal Charms of Serial Killers

Deadly Home Hazards Most Parents Miss
Always Tired? When it's Time to Worry About Chronic-Fatigue Syndrome.

FOUR MAGAZINES, and all this worry.

Skimming through several magazines, I find articles about pesticide poisoning, Lyme disease, stalkers and a woman who seduced her best friend's 12-year-old son.

I had to plunder the archives of my local library to find something similarly worrisome in a men's magazine.

I finally found a back issue of *Q* with the title, "Is AIDS Genocide?" and another that said "Prostate Probe: Not for Geezers Only." Adding the term "geezer" seemed to make the issue less serious, and "Is AIDS Genocide?" seemed more political and certainly less threatening than "Mom, I Have AIDS."

The only time I found the word "danger" was in "Extreme Skiing – The Most Dangerous Game." The definition of extreme skiing is: If you fall you die. Obviously men don't find the world frightening enough. They have to invent new death-defying sports to make their mothers and wives worry even more.

We live in two different worlds. A man's world is exciting, humorous and fashionable. A woman's world is fraught with danger.

Then I thought maybe I wasn't being fair. Maybe I should look at men's health magazines. They should have some headlines about depressing issues. They did. "New Baldness Breakthrough" and "Best Cuts for Thinning Hair."

Okay, so there were articles about stress, aging, the prostate, pain. But their headlines were positive, not stress-producing. I didn't find words like "deadly hazard," "warning," "risk" or "scary." Instead, I found headlines like "Relax, 99 Reasons You're Better Off Than You Think," "Live Longer – Secrets of Super Potency" and "Beat High Blood Pressure."

The men's magazines don't have articles on home safety, kids and untrustworthy friends and neighbors. Don't men have kids, homes, friends and neighbors?

Clearly, men could use a few new phobias. To that end, I propose that someone start a magazine called *Bluebook*. Then maybe my father would use that childproofing kit I bought him. And maybe my brother-in-law wouldn't allow his dog, her fur soaked with harmful anti-flea chemicals, to jump all over my infant daughter.

And maybe, just maybe, my husband wouldn't think I'm totally crazy when I suggest he keep his eyes on the kids at the mall.

The writer lives and worries in Oakton, Virginia.
(Los Angeles Times)

CORRECTION

In yesterday's article, "Hearts and heads," Susan Harris Rolef's reference was to hidden unemployment in government offices, not in the Histadrut labor federation itself.

הקדמת המחבר

BUSINESS & FINANCE

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 1994

Fed raises rates again

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the third time in as many months yesterday in a bid to rein in the robust economy before inflation takes off.

The Fed's action - which pushed up the key federal funds rate by a quarter percentage point to 3.75 percent - sparked steep drops in financial markets as investors dumped stocks and bonds.

Analysts generally expect the central bank to raise short-term interest rates at least one more time this year. That increase could come as soon as May 17 at the next meeting of the Fed's policy-making Open Market Committee.

The central bank announced the latest move to tighten credit in a terse statement released shortly after the stock market opened.

"Chairman Alan Greenspan announced today that the Federal Reserve will increase slightly the degree of pressure on (bank) reserve positions," the Fed said. "This action is expected to be associated with a small increase in short-term money interest rates."

The fed funds rate is the rate banks charge each other for short-term loans. The Fed regulates the rate by adding or draining funds from the banking system.

The Fed move is likely to lead to higher mortgage rates for home buyers and increased borrowing costs for credit card users, car buyers and corporations.

The White House reacted calmly to the rate increase, saying it was a reflection of the strength of the economy.

"We ... see continued growth

and very low inflation," White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers told reporters in Milwaukee, where President Clinton was slated to give a speech touting his health care plan.

Yesterday's rate increase came on the heels of a string of economic indicators showing growth remains strong.

That has sparked some worry at the Fed that the economy will soon begin straining against its capacity constraints, tempting companies to raise prices and workers to demand higher wages, which would boost inflation.

The economy soared at a 7% annual growth clip in the fourth quarter of last year - its best performance in 10 years. Although growth has cooled off some since, the slowdown has not been as pro-

nounced as had been widely expected.

This has fanned the Fed's fears of inflation even though recent economic reports have shown price pressures to be under control. Consumer prices rose at an annualized rate of just 2.5% in the first quarter, slightly slower than the 2.7% increase for all of last year.

But the Fed is looking ahead to next year and does not want to run the risk of throwing away the hard-fought gains it has made in recent years in fighting inflation by keeping interest rates too low now.

According to calculations by some Fed officials, the economy is already running at or just below full employment, portending price pressures down the road.

EX-IM Bank to finance \$180m. Ormat power station

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

ity is expected to start on July 1, 1994.

The power station is four times larger than the two power stations Ormat has built.

Meanwhile, Ormat Industries reported it ended 1993 with net profits of NIS 4.4m. compared with net losses of NIS 2.7m. in the previous year.

The makers of alternative fuel and electricity generators reported an 86% growth in sales to NIS240m. in 1993 compared with NIS 129m. in the previous year.

The firm, whose major market is geothermal energy, has a back-

log of orders of \$210m. for the 1994-1996 period.

The firm said the backlog does not include a tender the company won to establish an additional power station abroad as well as \$80m. in backlog orders for Beit Shemesh Turbines, which Ormat purchased last year.

Last year, Ormat raised NIS 47.4m. from the exercise of warrants.

The company's shareholders equity rose to NIS 152m. at the end of 1993, from NIS 97m. at the end of the previous year.

In addition, the company raised NIS 42m. in a private placement of bonds to institutional investors.

Retail trade up 50% in nominal terms

JOSE ROSENFELD

RETAIL trade jumped more than 50 percent in nominal terms last month compared with February, mostly as a result of Pessah sales, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported yesterday.

However, when the figures are seasonally adjusted, there was a more moderate rise of 5% to 6%.

During the first quarter of the year, retail trade increased a seasonally and inflation-adjusted 7% compared with the previous quarter - an annualized growth rate of 31%. The rise followed a flat fourth quarter. Sales grew 15% compared with the same period last year.

According to the bureau, retail sales rose in March due to the fact

that most of Pessah fell during that month. Sales received a definite stimulus from gift coupons of marketing networks and chain stores that workers received for the holiday from their employers.

In addition, special sales and credit offered by large marketing networks attracted more business.

The bureau's survey includes marketing networks, chain stores, supermarkets, and retail stores selling food, textiles, clothing, shoes, durable goods, and other goods except for cars, car parts, and residential heating oil and gas.

According to the bureau, retail store sales represent 25% of all private consumption expenditures and 30% of all food expenditures.



Cla Trade managing director Amram Ben-Tuvia yesterday hands a check for NIS 59,885,463 to Finance Minister Avraham Shohat for the purchase of Malam Systems, as outgoing company chairman Moshe Lipka (center) and Clal Israel Managing Director David Weinshel (left) look on. The government will also receive a NIS 10m. dividend from the company. Clal Computers, a subsidiary of Clal Trade, acquired Malam Systems. (Isaac Harari)

Kibbutz industries' exports fall 5% last year

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

KIBBUTZ industries' exports fell five percent in 1993 to \$733 million, mainly due to a drop in the sale of citrus concentrates. Micha Hertz, chairman of the Association of Kibbutz Industries, said yesterday.

He said kibbutz industries accounted for the country's highest volume of citrus concentrate exports last year.

He blamed the decline on the excess supply of citrus concentrates in world markets in 1993, which led to a fall in prices and a 21% decline in exports. Markets were flooded with citrus concentrates from Brazil and Florida last year.

One-third of all kibbutz industries' products are for export markets, Hertz added.

He predicted kibbutz industries' exports would rise 20% this year, even though the volume of industrial exports has remained unchanged since the third quarter of last year.

Growth in industrial exports, however, is dependent on inten-

sive marketing efforts, especially in new markets like China, India, and Asia, he added.

"We require a lot of assistance from the authorities, particularly to guarantee industries against trade risks."

Managing Director of the Kibbutz Industries Association, Oded Brish, said kibbutz industries' sales

reached \$2.32 billion in 1993. Their share of the country's total industrial sales reached 6.3% last year.

In 1993, the leading kibbutz sector was the plastic and rubber field, with sales of \$827m., of which \$318m. were exports. The second largest field was the food sector, with sales of \$390m., including exports of \$138m.

Commando tax force hits Haifa-area construction sites

JOSE ROSENFELD

A COMMANDO force of tax inspectors and police descended on Haifa-area construction sites yesterday to zero-in on tax evaders, the Treasury reported.

The task force combed through hundreds of private construction sites in the Denya neighborhood, Rechasin, Kiryat Ata, Kiryat Tivon, and Tirat Hacarmel.

During the operation, a huge amount of information was collected on property owners, on those ordering and performing construction work, on the construction area, and on the quality and extent of the construction.

From initial reports, dozens of subcontractors who failed to file with income tax authorities were caught. The operation also uncovered smuggled goods and hundreds of thousands of shekels in unreported income.

The particulars of vehicles and heavy mechanical equipment were

recorded to compare them with income tax computer files. All the vehicles of tax debtors were attached on the spot, and some were released after the owners paid their tax bill at Haifa's income tax office.

Dozens of employees were brought in for investigation, and some will have criminal cases opened against them.

Workers from the territories without permits were found and arrested at construction sites, despite the closure.

The operation, organized by Haifa Income Tax Office Director Adalina Bendel, was meant to check the level of tax compliance in the area. The operation continued into the night, with inspectors checking area industrial and commercial zones.

Income Tax Commissioner Doron Levy noted that tax compliance operations of this type will continue.

Ma'ariv Holdings profits up 82.8%

COMPANY RESULTS

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

MA'ARIV Holdings, the holding company of the Ma'ariv Group, reported an 82.8% increase in net profits to NIS 13.3m. compared with profits of NIS 7.28m. in 1992.

The company has been traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange since March.

Sales fell less than 1% last year, to NIS 252.8m. compared with NIS 254.7m. in 1992. Despite the decline, gross profits increased 27.7% to NIS 81m. from

NIS 63.43m. in 1992. Hamastal Industries (Netanya) reported a 27% drop in first quarter net earnings to NIS 224,000, from NIS 312,000 in the same period in 1993.

Sales fell to NIS 4.67m., compared with NIS 5.72m. in the previous year.

Istec Industries and Technology, which is traded over the counter in New York, ended 1993 with net profits of NIS 3.5m., compared with NIS 1m. in the previous year. The company reported profits of NIS 2.88m. in the fourth quarter of last year, compared with NIS 122,308 in 1992.

In last year's fourth quarter, the firm purchased 52.5% of the US-based Data Link, which is engaged in the development and distribution of control systems. Istec also purchased 60% of Dynamy Portfolio Management and 6.8% of Carmel Mortgage Bank.

D. Rotshten Construction & Assets ended last year with net profits of NIS 17m., compared with net profits of NIS 3.96m. in 1992. The building contractor's total revenues fell to NIS 6.06m., from IS 39.8m. in 1992.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Panel rules on private placement prices to shareholders: Private placements to principal shareholders in a company can be priced at no less than 95% of the stock's current value, whether the offering consists of actual shares or options, the Knesset finance committee decided yesterday. Previously, the 95% rule applied only to actual shares.

Gov't takes active control of Bank Discount today: Committee members appointed by the Wallenstein public committee are to attend Bank Discount's shareholders meeting today. The members, representing the government, will take advantage of their majority and replace five directors and add an additional one to the bank's current board of directors.

Government Companies Authority appointment: Accountant Eitan Shapir was appointed director of the privatization division of the Government Companies Authority, as well as the authority's deputy director, the Treasury announced yesterday.

Shohat asks panel to okay follow-on savings programs: Finance Minister Avraham Shohat yesterday requested the Knesset finance committee to approve follow-on savings programs for participants in old savings programs offered by the Housing Ministry through Bank Tefahot.

Tourism Ministry Director-General Eli Gonen signed a cooperative agreement yesterday with Australian-Israeli Chamber of Commerce President Leon Kempler and Director-General John Weiss to encourage tourism from Australia to here. Over the last two years, 20,000 Australian tourists have visited here.

WORLD BRIEFS

Kidder Peabody fires chief gov't bond trader: Kidder Peabody and Co. fired its chief government bond trader after uncovering fraudulent trading apparently intended to inflate the firm's profits. Following the shocking findings, Kidder said \$350 million in profits tallied in the last year never existed.

The company announced it fired Joseph Jett, 36, after it uncovered the phony trading last week. Jett earned \$9m. last year, *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* reported yesterday.

Bank of Jordan said yesterday it was restoring its dividend after a 4.8 percent rise in net profits to 3.26m. dinars (\$4.63m.) last year from 3.11m. dinars (\$4.40m.) in 1992.

The board of directors proposed distributing 630,000 dinars (\$894,000) of profits to shareholders, the first dividend since 1989.

Japanese trade surplus probably will shrink: Japan's trade surplus swelled to a record \$121.99 billion in the year to March 31 but economists yesterday said the figure, irritatingly high for competitors demanding access to its markets, is likely to shrink this year.

"It won't drop drastically but the surplus has peaked," said Kozo Koide, economist at the Industrial Bank of Japan Ltd.

China says economy is stabilizing: China reported yesterday that its runaway economy stabilized in the first quarter of 1994 but inflation, a weakening state sector and widening income disparity remained serious.

Gross domestic product in the quarter was 862b. yuan (\$99b.), a price-adjusted increase of 12.7%, and down from an increase of 13.4% for all of 1993 over 1992.

UK producer prices subdued: British producer prices were subdued in March, official figures showed yesterday, leading some economists to predict an imminent interest rate cut.

The prices charged by companies for manufactured goods rose by just 0.1% compared with February, and were 2.7% higher than in March last year, the Central Statistical Office reported.

ISRAELI MONEY MARKETS

Patah (foreign currency deposit rates) (18.4.94)				
Currency (deposit for:)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	3.280	3.825	4.250	
U.S. dollar (\$500,000)	3.420	3.750	4.000	
Pound sterling (£100,000)	4.370	4.657	4.949	
German mark (DM 200,000)	4.825	4.500	4.375	
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	2.875	2.875	2.875	
Yen (10 million yen)	0.625	0.750	1.000	

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (18.4.94)				
CURRENCY AND TRANSFERS	SHEKEL		BANKNOTES	
	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell
Currency basket	3.1970	3.2420	—	—
U.S. dollar	2.9722	3.0151	2.92	3.06
German mark	1.7381	1.7628	1.71	1.79
Pound sterling	4.3700	4.4357	4.29	4.49
French franc	0.5080	0.5151	0.48	0.52
Japanese yen (100)	2.8715	2.9120	2.82	2.96
Dutch florin	1.5485	1.5704	1.52	1.58
Swiss franc	2.0446	2.0734	2.01	2.09
Norwegian krone	0.3768	0.3821	0.37	0.38
Swedish krona	0.4009	0.4066	0.39	0.41
Danish krone	0.4433	0.4486	0.44	0.45
Finnish mark	0.5402	0.5478	0.53	0.54
Canadian dollar	2.1475	2.1776	2.11	2.21
Australian dollar	2.1481	2.1794	2.09	2.21
S. African rand	0.8139	0.8254	0.71	0.87
Belgian franc (10)	0.9449	0.9598	0.83	0.97
Austrian schilling (10)	2.4894	2.5042	2.43	2.54
Italian lire (1000)	1.8521	1.8668	1.78	1.89
Jordanian dinar	—	—	4.11	4.35
Egyptian pound	—	—	0.86	0.91
ECU	3.3597	3.4071	—	—
Irish punt	4.2517	4.3116	4.15	4.31
Spanish peseta (100)	2.1324	2.1624	2.07	2.22

* These rates vary according to bank. ** Bank of Israel.

SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

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In 1994, you too, could become a genuine partner in the profits of The First International Bank. At the end of the year, The First International Bank will allocate 8% of its net consolidated profits for the year, to its customers. The banking transactions that you conduct during 1994, give you points - and the more points you accumulate, the greater your profits. In order to enable you to benefit from our customer profit sharing remuneration system, we have introduced for your convenience

"The Easy and Profitable Route", a unique program whereby you can transfer your accounts to The First International Bank, with no delay or inconvenience. The costs that you incur in the transfer, are borne by us. Whichever account you may have, now is the time to make the most of it and join our customers who are already increasing their profits. For further details, contact your nearest First International Bank branch.

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DIAL 03-5199111 FROM 8 AM TO 11 PM.
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Key Representative Rates

	Change
US dollar ...NIS 2.9910	+0.13%
Sterling ...NIS 4.3975	-0.07%
Mark ...NIS 1.7478	+0.11%

INFLATION

MARKETS

New York market indexes

	Last	Change
DJ Industrials	3030.42	-11.05
DJ 30	2985.31	-11.33
DJ 100	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Composite	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Midcap	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Smallcap	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Microcap	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Biotech	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Energy	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Financial	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Health Care	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Technology	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Telecommunications	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Utilities	2985.31	-11.33
NYSE Other	2985.31	-11.33

NYSE stocks

Unchanged Advances Declines

Advances	113
Declines	104
Unchanged	104

Volume (in 1000s)

NYSE	74500
NASDAQ	177000

Other stock market indexes

	Last	Change
FTSE 100	2138.2	-30.1
S&P 500	2027.7	-12.7
Hong Kong Hang Seng	5004.4	-25.2

Israeli stocks in NY

	Last	Change
Amir	44.25	0
Amir B	44.25	0
Amir C	44.25	0
Amir D	44.25	0
Amir E	44.25	0
Amir F	44.25	0
Amir G	44.25	0
Amir H	44.25	0
Amir I	44.25	0
Amir J	44.25	0
Amir K	44.25	0
Amir L	44.25	0
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NYSE / AMEX

	Last	Change
Amir	44.25	0
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NASDAQ / over-the-counter

	Last	Change
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Greek duel promises thrilling show Lara's 375 is world mark

TEL AVIV (Reuters) - Greece's big two bitter rivals promise a thrilling finale to the European club basketball season.

Olympiakos and Panathinaikos, the sport's new superpowers in Europe, will be backed by some 5,000 Greek fans for the Final Four competition starting tonight.

Spain's Barcelona and Badalona complete the line-up for the three-day climax to the season.

The owners of the two clubs have pumped some \$16 million into the effort to get their teams to the Final Four.

"Believe me, I care less about the final with Barcelona or Badalona and more about our match with Panathinaikos. If we lose I will have a stroke," said Olympiakos fan Petros Tsanas, who spent a month's salary to travel to Israel.

Olympiakos are favorites to beat Panathinaikos and then take the trophy in the final with one of the Spanish teams.

But Yannis Yannakis, Olympiakos general manager, said: "We know that we are seen as favorites but we want to feel like outsiders."

"When Olympiakos is the outsider the team performs its best," Olympiakos have probably the best pair of foreigners in Europe - giant American forward Roy Tarpley and Montenegrin star Zarko Paspalj. Both are heavy scorers.

The front line is completed by the 2.12-meter national team captain Panayotis Fasoulas while guards Milan Tomic and George Sigalas are capable of providing fine back court leadership and sinking plenty of three-point jumpers.

Panathinaikos has surprised everybody with their erratic path to the Final Four. They lost to France's Orthez in the qualifiers, but then beat champions Limoges twice.

Panathinaikos will rely heavily on star playmaker Nick Galis. The 36-year-old is in sparkling form and tops the points scorers with 466.

It will also be Panathinaikos' first Final Four but Galis has the experience of another three with his former team Aris.

Giant Croat Stojan Vrankovic is recovering from a back injury which robbed the Greeks of the intimidation factor on defense. Ukrainian Alexander Volkov is doing well but has a long way to go to justify his \$2.2 million contract. Barcelona, back after a two-

year absence from the top European competition, dumped the useful Efes Pilsen from the quarter-finals to earn their spot in the top four.

This year will probably be the last chance for veteran Juan Antonio San Epifanio to win the European trophy after three failed attempts. The standard-bearer of Spanish basketball, San Epifanio is a three-point specialist.

Juventut Badalona showed their class by knocking out "Europe's Queen" Real Madrid. The Catalans were European finalists two years ago, losing to Partizan Belgrade.

They field Mike Smith, a player with enormous physical capabilities, best known for his spectacular leaps and slam-dunks, and brothers Rafael and Tomas Jofresa.



ST. JOHN'S, Antigua (AP) - West Indian batsman Brian Lara completed a world record single-innings score of 375 yesterday.

beating the 365 hit by countryman Sir Garfield Sobers 36 years ago.

Batting against England in the fifth Test, Lara's total included 45 fours. Sobers' unbeaten 365 was made against Pakistan at Kingston, Jamaica, in 1958.

As soon as the stroke was played, hundreds of jubilant spectators in a crowd of 12,000 burst through police lines to engulf their hero while calypso music blared out from bands and stereo-systems in the stand.

Lara was finally dismissed for 375 with the last ball before lunch after edging a catch to wicket keeper Jack Russell off fast bowler Andy Caddick.

He batted in all for 767 minutes (more than 12½ hours) and faced 537 balls with 45 fours.

The West Indies declared on 593 for five at lunch.

Sobers, who was honored by the Antiguan government in a ceremony celebrating his 40th anniversary of his debut in Test cricket, walked into the field and congratulated the new record-holder.

But he had to wait for the crowd to clear before he could get near.

Lara started the day unbeaten 340 with the West Indies 502 for four. The tension as he approached the mark was obvious as he played more false strokes than he had done through the first two days of his innings.

He added four boundaries to the 40 he had made at the start but was mainly content to collect his runs



LARA'S SONG - West Indian Brian Lara is lifted after scoring 375 runs against England yesterday. (Reuters)

with singles and twos. Three times in one over from Lewis, he sent the crowd into a nervous frenzy by sprinting two's with the fielder closing on the ball.

The first time, he just managed to slide home as Russell broke the stumps on Mark Ramprakash's

return. Once, his 19-year-old partner, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, came down the wicket to admonish him for a false stroke. Lara broke into a huge smile of relief and punched the air in joy once he reached the mark.

FIBA warns Greeks: Mind your manners

TEL AVIV (Reuters) - The choice for the thousands of avid Greek basketball fans - behave or spend a week in jail before being deported.

"We've heard of the strict security measures in Israel and I told our fans to be good or they will be left behind. The team condemns violence and will not help any troublemakers," said Panathinaikos president Pavlos Yannakopoulos.

Some 5,000 fiery Greeks will pack planes and two chartered ships to back Panathinaikos and Olympiakos.

Fears of violent behavior have brought threats and warnings from team officials and the international federation FIBA.

But everyone knows that disputed referee calls could turn the stadium into a fevered cauldron.

"We will be watching the Greeks closely,"

said FIBA's general secretary Borislav Stankovic. "It is a pity. Greece probably has the best basketball in Europe and its own fans are the ones who undermine it."

Stankovic warned crowd misbehavior could cost Athens next year's European championships and revealed that several members of FIBA's executive committee wanted to exclude Greek teams from European tournaments.

FIBA has in the past penalized with fines or bans most major Greek teams, including Olympiakos and Panathinaikos.

Officials keep a close eye for fan trouble, especially after the Cup Winner's Cup final in Turin, Italy last year when Greek hooligans attacked Turkish players.

But Olympiakos general manager Yannis Yannakis says the ugly side of Greek basketball is deliberately exaggerated by European

mass media.

"The traditional European basketball powers - Spain, France and Italy - want to undermine Greece because they feel threatened by the rise of Greek basketball. This is why their press is playing up the Greek violence card," he said.

"In any case the trip to Tel Aviv is not cheap and those who afford it are certainly not hooligans," he said.

Olympiakos president Socrates Kokkalis was equally outspoken: "We will make sure that our fans will do nothing bad in Israel but I hope everyone understands that Greeks are passionate fans and basketball is not a classical music concert."

All Greek fans will be body-searched before entering the stadium and 600 specially trained officers will guard them throughout the tournament.

Messier leads Rangers to rout of Islanders



Sunday.

Led by a goal and two assists from Mark Messier, the Rangers enjoyed a surprisingly easy victory over the New York Islanders 4-0 in the opener of their Eastern Conference series.

The Stars beat St. Louis 5-3 in a Western Conference opener with backup goaltender Darcy Wakuluk a surprise starter over Andy Moog, the 10th winningest goaltender in NHL history. Waluluk made 33 saves as the Stars brought playoff hockey to Texas.

The playoffs were scheduled to continue last night with the Islanders visiting the Rangers and Montreal at Boston in the Eastern Conference, and San Jose at Detroit, Chicago at Toronto and Vancouver at Calgary in the West.

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Rangers 6, Islanders 0

The Rangers, looking very much like the league's top team, led 2-0 after the first period and 4-0 after two, making it easy for goaltender Mike Richter, who had 21 saves in recording his third playoff shutout.

Messier assisted on Brian Leetch's power-play goal in the first period, then scored at 9:13 of the second to launch a four-goal spurge. Messier's goal was the backbreaker, a shot from deep in the left circle that Hextall probably should have stopped. It gave the Rangers a 3-0 lead and the Islanders were never the same after that.

Sergei Zubov had a goal and two assists for the Rangers.

Sabres 2, Devils 0
Rookie Todd Simon scored his first NHL goal and Dominik Hasek made it stand up in a brilliant goaltending duel as Buffalo won on the road.

Simon, who had just one assist in 15 games this season, tipped a shot past New Jersey rookie goalie Martin Brodeur with 11 seconds left in the first

period during a power play.

Game two will be at New Jersey today.

Capitals 5, Penguins 3
Peter Bondra and Mike Ridley scored 2:22 apart in the second period for visiting Washington.

Mario Lemieux scored twice for the Penguins, who won the Northeast Division, Pittsburgh, which has eliminated Washington from the Stanley Cup playoffs twice in the last four seasons, hosts game two today.

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Stars 5, St. Louis 3

Grant Ledyard and Trent Klatt scored late third-period goals and Waluluk made them stand up as host Dallas won. Waluluk started his first playoff game.

Magic end Bulls' streak behind Shaq's 32



ORLANDO (AP) - The Orlando Magic ended Chicago's 10-game winning streak and moved a game closer to clinching home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs with a 118-101 victory over the Bulls on Sunday.

Shaquille O'Neal had 32 points, 14 rebounds and two blocked shots. Nick Anderson added 22 points and Arneferne Hardaway had 21 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

Orlando leads Cleveland by 2½ games in the race for the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. The Magic (47-31) have four games remaining; the Cavs (45-34) three. Chicago, meanwhile, missed an opportunity to pull ahead of New York in the battle for best record in the conference.

Nets 110, Heat 103
Kenny Anderson scored six of his 29 points down the stretch and visiting New Jersey clinched a playoff spot for the third straight year.

Miami, losers of five straight and 12 of 15, is 1½ games ahead of Charlotte for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

New Jersey matched its victory total of last year and won the season series with Miami 3-2. Benoit Benjamin finished with 25 points and 12 rebounds. Derrick Coleman, plagued by foul troubles throughout the contest, was held to seven points, 13 below his season average.

Bullets 142, Celtics 104
Don MacLean had 21 points and

Calbert Cheaney 20 as host Washington had its most lopsided victory ever. Tom Gugliotta and Kevin Duckworth had 18 points each for the Bulls, who ended a three-game losing streak with its biggest offensive output of the season.

Hornets 107, Knicks 91
Larry Johnson scored 22 points and Hersey Hawkins had 20 as host Charlotte, playing without suspended center Alonzo Mourning, kept its playoff hopes alive.

Johnson was 10-for-20 from the field with 12 rebounds. He also made three straight baskets, two from outside, midway through the fourth quarter to hold off the Knicks.

The rest of the Hornets also played well. Dell Curry scored 15 points, Frank Brickowski 11 and Kenny Gattison 10. Patrick Ewing led New York with 20 points.

Nuggets 99, Timberwolves 88
LaPhonso Ellis and Robert Pack sparked a 40-13 second-half run and visiting Denver rallied from a 16-point third-quarter deficit.

Denver, which two days earlier clinched the NBA's final Western Conference playoff berth, improved to 39-39. The Nuggets are seeking their first winning season since 1989-90. Ellis finished with 21 points for the Nuggets, who shot 53 percent from the floor.

Christian Laettner had 19 points and 12 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who have lost six straight games and 11 of their last 12.

Pacers 104, Pistons 99
Byron Scott scored nine of his 16 points in the fourth quarter, leading visiting Indiana to a playoff-clinching victory.

The loss was Detroit's ninth straight, while Indiana tied a team record with its 17th road win of the year.

Rik Smits also had 16 points for Indiana. Isiah Thomas, perhaps playing in his next-to-last home game, led all scorers with 22.

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
New York	54	24	.692	-
Orlando	47	31	.603	7
New Jersey	43	36	.544	11½
Miami	40	39	.506	14½
Boston	30	49	.385	24
Philadelphia	24	54	.308	30
Washington	23	55	.295	31

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Atlanta	55	23	.705	-
Chicago	54	25	.684	1½
Cleveland	45	34	.570	10½
Indiana	43	35	.551	12
Charlotte	38	40	.487	17
Detroit	20	58	.256	35
Milwaukee	12	59	.164	38

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Seattle	60	18	.769	-
Phoenix	52	26	.667	8
Golden State	47	31	.603	13
Portland	46	33	.582	14½
L.A. Lakers	33	45	.423	27
L.A. Clippers	27	51	.344	33
Sacramento	27	51	.344	33

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
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San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
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Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Houston	57	21	.731	-
San Antonio	53	26	.671	4½
Utah	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Seattle	60	18	.769	-
Phoenix	52	26	.667	8
Golden State	47	31	.603	13
Portland	46	33	.582	14½
L.A. Lakers	33	45	.423	27
L.A. Clippers	27	51	.344	33
Sacramento	27	51	.344	33

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

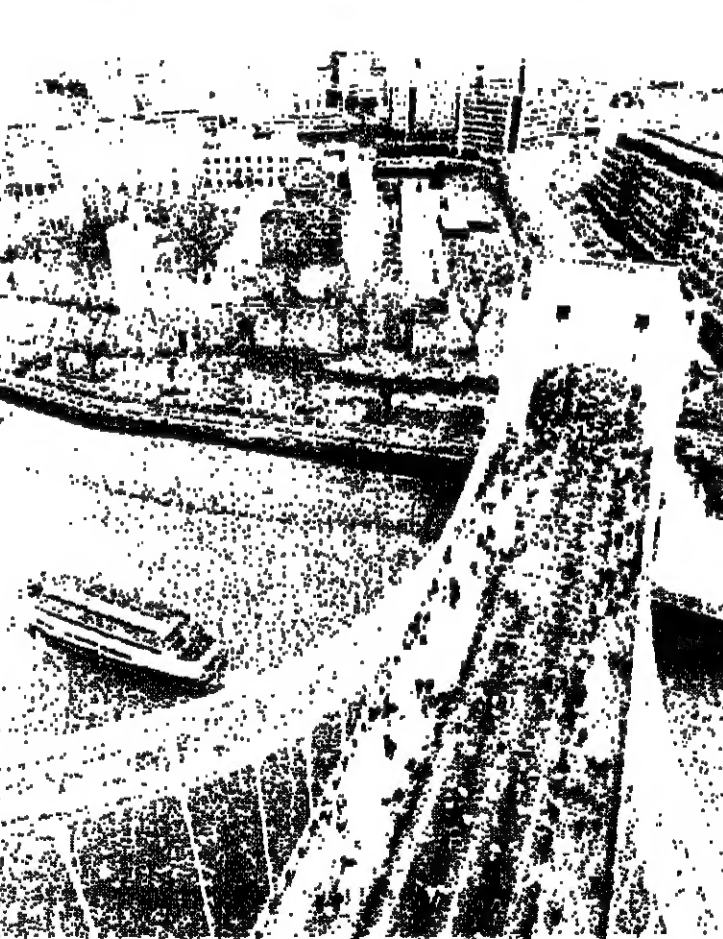
	W	L	Pct.	GB
San Antonio	49	29	.625	8
Denver	39	39	.500	18
Minnesota	20	58	.256	37
Dallas	11	67	.141	46

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London's bridge is all filled up



Runners cross the Tower Bridge in the opening minutes of the 14th London Marathon. Mexico's Dionicio Ceron won in 2:08:53. Germany's Katrin Dorre was the first to win the race three straight years, taking women's honors in 2:32:34. Across the Atlantic, Kenya's Cosmas Ndeti won the 98th Boston Marathon yesterday, setting a

Namir: Employers too dependent on Palestinians

SASHA SADAN

LABOR and Social Affairs Minister Ora Namir lashed out at employers and workers yesterday, saying that 27 years of occupation had taken its toll on the economy.

Employers don't want to hire Israeli workers, as they have become dependent on cheap Palestinian labor, she said at a newsconference.

As for the Israeli worker, Namir said she had forced the jobless to take work in agriculture or lose unemployment benefits, and in the last month had put 1,812 people to work in the citrus harvest. But, she added, 1,456 workers had opted not to work at all and lose their benefits.

Namir said she suspected that the decline in the number of jobless registering with the Employment Service showed that people are waking up to the fact that the labor laws are being enforced. She said workers would rather remain jobless than work in agriculture or construction, noting that less than 100 had registered for programs to train construction workers last month.

"We live in an absurd situation," she said, "with 33,000 people requesting unemployment benefits last month." She said that willingness to take only certain jobs was "a cultural norm that has to stop."

Namir said the service had a pool of more than 13,000 workers under 35, 3,146 men and 10,329 women, who would be forced to take the jobs available.

Employers' dependence on Palestinian labor, she said, continues despite the law and despite the threat to security.

About an hour before the news conference, Namir said, her ministry's unit for investigating labor law violations and the police had raided a chicken processing plant in Beit Shemesh and arrested 19 illegal workers from the territories.

Namir said that before the last closure, there were 48,900 workers from the territories legally employed in Israel. The government would now allow 16,000 into Israel on a regular basis "for humanitarian reasons." But only another 4,900 would be given entry permits for work, and they would go to agriculture.

Namir said that bringing in the 18,000 foreign workers approved by the cabinet last week is still in the early stages, and that agreeing to their entry, for security reasons, was the "hardest decision I have had to make as minister."

She also noted that at present there are 12,728 foreign workers in the country, nearly 6,000 of them in construction.

Fewer job seekers in March

SASHA SADAN

THE number of jobless who register with the Employment Service last month dropped 5.3%, following the trend of the 7.6% drop in February.

But Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Ora Namir presented the positive statistics yesterday along with some worrying trends — more jobless going longer without work, resistance to positive change in the Negev and other depressed areas, jobless who are not ready to take the work available and a grim picture of job offers.

Namir specified tougher restrictions on workers from the territories, saying male workers would have to be married and at least 30 years old to get permits. The lower age limit was formerly 27.

Jobless registering with the Employment Service dropped to 107,600 in March, compared with 111,600 in February and 118,800 in January. If seasonal factors are taken into account, however, the decline is less dramatic. Corrected figures for last month show that the decline should be seen as a drop to 101,900 jobless from 107,600, or 5.3% drop.

But the number of jobless who had been without employment for six days or more rose to 81.2% of those coming into the Employment Service, while they num-

bered 77.9% of the jobless in February and 75.7% in January.

There was also a 5.1% rise last month in the number of new immigrants who are jobless, after a steady decline in their numbers over the last two years. Some 10,300 new immigrants registered with the service last month, compared to 9,800 in February.

Namir pointed out that only 14 localities had unemployment over 10%, compared to 18 in February. The town of Rahat still tops every other locale in the country with 16.8% unemployment.

Namir pointed out that employers' requests for workers climbed 7.9% in March to 19,700 job offers, from 18,300 in February. However, the more telling figures are the increase of job offers this time of year, especially in agriculture.

In Upper Galilee, Jezreel Valley, Nazareth, Western Galilee, Haifa and the Eastern Negev, the Employment Service received no job offers last month. In the Central Negev, there was one job offer, and in the Western Negev, there were 10.

The localities with the highest unemployment include Kiryat Gat, 13.1%; Mitzpeh Rimon, 12.4%; Ofakim, 12.3%; Upper Yokneam, 11.8%; Or Akiva, 11.5%; and Kiryat Malachi, 11.3%.



Arriving to testify before the Shamgar Commission yesterday are (from left) Imam Mohammed ibn-Assad, Meliha Ja'abri, and Haj Ahmed Nasser. (Brian Hemdri)

Goldstein didn't act alone, witnesses tell Shamgar Commission

BATSHEVA TSUR

TWO Moslem residents of Hebron, who were praying at the Machpela Cave at the time of the massacre, told the Shamgar Commission yesterday that Baruch Goldstein had not acted alone.

The commission convened to hear the testimony of Haj Ahmed Nasser, Imam Mohammed ibn-Assad, and Meliha Ja'abri, at their request. The proceedings were held up for more than an hour as the witnesses were delayed on their way to Jerusalem by army roadblocks.

"I heard two explosions, as if the mosque were falling on our heads, and then immediately afterwards the automatic fire started," Nasser told the commission during almost three hours of testimony. The shots continued from a different direction even after Goldstein was overpowered by the worshippers, he added.

But the commission members questioned the veracity of much of his testimony. When Nasser described to the court how he had seen a gun "about the width of my thumb" protruding through the door from the Abraham Hall (where the Jews were praying) and shooting in

the direction of the Moslems, Judge Abdel Rahman Zuabi produced a picture of the door. "It is made of solid wood without any apertures," he said.

Nasser described at length the events of the evening prior to the massacre, when Moslems and Jews had clashed. The settlers, he said, "desecrated the holy place by relieving themselves there, getting drunk and vomiting in the mosque, and bringing dogs in with them."

Justice Eliezer Goldberg: Did you see this? Nasser: I saw the Moslems cleaning it up. Goldberg: How did the Moslems react to the dogs? Didn't the wafk guards try to stop them? Didn't anyone complain? If it's true, it's very serious.

Nasser: Let's not waste time on the dogs. The wafk isn't there all the time to see. I can prove it to you.

Goldberg: Remind the witness that he must tell the truth.

Nasser concluded by telling the commission

that he personally had lost NIS 500,000 since the closure of the territories. "If Israel is a democracy, open up the territories again," he appealed. "It is worse for the Palestinians than the massacre."

Ibn-Assad told the court that Goldstein had been joined by soldiers in the massacre.

"Did you see them firing?" Goldberg asked. And when the witness replied in the negative, he asked: "Then why did you say in your original testimony that you had seen soldiers firing inside the hall?"

Ja'abri, the only Moslem woman to testify before the commission, said that she had been hit in the head. However, she could not remember how or when it had happened.

Meanwhile, Tel Aviv lawyers Amnon Galbert and Yoel Shlomo yesterday petitioned the High Court of Justice seeking Zuabi's suspension. They said that Zuabi had disqualified himself because of remarks attributed to him in a recent *Ma'ariv* interview. According to the report, Zuabi had described the settlers as the source of all evil in the territories. He later denied making any such remarks.

Knesset panel in uproar after hearing TAAS considered breaking possible strike by making purchases abroad

EVELYN GORDON

THE Knesset labor and social affairs committee erupted yesterday after being informed that TAAS had considered making purchases abroad in the event of a strike in one of its factories.

The announcement came during a discussion of TAAS' plan to close its factory in Mishor Adumim, a decision which workers are fighting. Danny Goldstein, a member of TAAS' management, told the committee that it had looked into purchasing parts from Germany if workers at the plant declared a

strike in protest. Otherwise, he said, it would be impossible for the company to meet its commitments.

"It is insupportable that the management of a government company would follow a monstrous policy of ordering work from abroad to break a strike," committee chairman Amir Peretz (Labor) said. "The entire management of TAAS should resign."

"Jerusalem needs industrial factories like it needs air to breathe," he added, "and we cannot continue the trend of closing factories in the city, thereby turning it into a city of clerks."

However, TAAS officials said there was no choice but to close the factory. Deputy managing director Shmuel Kaufman said the plant's accumulated losses since 1991 were NIS 24 million, while projected orders for 1995 were a mere NIS 5m., and actual orders were only NIS 1m. Attempts to convert the factory to other products had failed, he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MiAs' families launch hunger strike

The families of three Israeli MiAs are conducting a hunger strike opposite the Prime Minister's Office, demanding that PLO leader Yasser Arafat reveal all the information he has on the MiAs before Palestinian prisoners are released.

The Baumel, Katz and Feldman families are conducting the hunger strike. Yona Baumel, the father of missing soldier Zecharia Baumel, accused government negotiators of being "inept," and said "the Arabs are better wheeler-dealers."

Baumel also accused Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin of making comments implying Israel would not let the MiA issue block the road to peace. "If the government has decided to abandon these boys, let the government say that it's what it's doing," Baumel said.

Israel tops world in work accidents

ISRAEL leads the world in work accidents, Yossi Tamir, director-general of the National Insurance Institute said yesterday, opening a Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs congress on safety.

Israel is first with 4.5% of workers employed injured, followed by Finland (4.13%) the US (2.65%), Sweden (1.93%) and Denmark (1.71%).

In 1985, 59,000 workers were injured on the job, losing 1,030,000 days of work. In 1993, the number of work accidents stood at 80,000 with 2,100,000 work days lost. New immigrants account for 8.8% of the work accidents, but only 5% of the population.

Private eyes suspected in wiretappings remanded for another week

RAINE MARCUS

YA'ACOV TSUR AND Rafi Friedman, the private investigators arrested for allegedly tapping telephones, cellular phones and faxes of *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ma'ariv* senior employees, Tel Aviv mayor Ronni Milo and dozens of other people, were remanded for another week yesterday by the Tel Aviv Magistrates Court.

Ma'ariv chief editor Ofer Nimrodi, editor Ya'acov Erez and managing director Ya'acov Kedmi sent a letter to the Tel Aviv police central unit yesterday complaining their phones had also been tapped.

On Sunday, private investigator and former police officer Micha Rotem was questioned by detectives, who suspect him of disrupting their investigation by concealing evidence.

Police alleged that Rotem, who was in Tsur and Friedman's office at the time of the latter's arrest, disposed of cars used in illegal wiretapping. He was released Sunday night.

Police said in court yesterday that they expect to question six more potential suspects. They are also exploring the possibility that Bezek employees cooperated with Friedman and Tsur.

According to a private investigator, such cooperation is necessary to tap faxes, which is not illegal. Fax tappers need a computer equipped with a program to decipher fax signals, and the job requires special skills.

Police say they have contracts between Agam, Friedman and Tsur's investigation company and car rental companies, and are presently searching for several vehicles believed to have been used in wiretapping.

Tsur still denies all connection to the case, but police suspect he concealed evidence on the day of his arrest. Friedman admits he was involved in three cases of wiretapping but still maintains his acts were not illegal.

The pair's lawyer, Motti Katz, said that police are trying to pressure his clients by keeping them in custody, and that there is no danger they will disrupt proceedings if placed under house arrest.

He is still advising his clients to keep silent, and police are still trying to discover who ordered the bugging.

"It is also possible that the client ordered a tap on his own phone, too, to confuse potential investigations," said one police officer.

Katz argued in court that no private investigator has ever served a prison sentence for wiretapping.

But Judge Miriam Sokolov upheld a police request for a further remand, "to allow police to continue with their investigation and to prevent the possibility of concealing evidence."

Anonymous caller plays morbid trick on controversial Tel Aviv judge

RAINE MARCUS

TEL AVIV District Court Judge Haim Adar, currently the center of a controversy in the Justice Ministry, was the victim of a morbid practical joke yesterday when an unknown caller phoned to tell him his wife had suffered a heart attack.

She received a similar call about him, probably from someone with old scores to settle against the judge who the Law Society wants to see removed from the bench. Both calls were hoaxes.

Adar had just announced that he would be presiding in a debate until 6 p.m. when his secretary disturbed him, saying he had an urgent phone call. The caller told Adar his wife had suffered a heart attack and was in Ichilov Hospital.

Halting court proceedings abruptly, Adar rushed to the hospital where he found his wife, healthy but anxious, waiting for him. She had also received an anonymous phone call, saying that her husband had been taken to the hospital in an ambulance, following a heart attack.

The couple have filed a complaint with police.

Meanwhile, the Justice Ministry Judges' Appointment Committee has not yet reached a decision on Adar, who, during a debate three weeks ago ordered police to arrest a defense lawyer and to "gag" with a scarf a defendant's mouth. The committee is waiting for Adar's reaction before ruling.

The Tel Aviv Bar Association launched an official complaint to Justice Minister David Liba, asking him to take disciplinary action against the judge.

"Judge Adar's behavior in court is a gross violation of democracy," said Bar Association acting president Moshe Aloni at the time. "Lawyers and defendants alike are afraid to appear in his court."

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